

# SEASON OF THE TWO - HEART

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IT WAS SEPTEMBER when she first came to the Boyntons'. Always after, she would remember that it was September.

"A two-hearted season," her mother called it; neither summer nor autumn. The planting done, and the harvest not yet ready; the days still heavy with heat, and the nights suddenly chill.

"Did you bring enough clothes?" asked Mr. Boynton, eyeing the small canvas bag doubtfully. "You won't be going back, you know, before Christmas."

"It will be fine, thank you," said Natachu.

The sun on her back was hot as they crossed the lawn to the house. Inside, the hallway was dark and cool, and the living room opened out from it in airy spaciousness. The woman rising from the pale green sofa looked as though she belonged there, set against the white and gold of the draperies, part of the elegance and coolness.

"Doris," Mr. Boynton said heartily, "we're here!"

"I see you are. Was it a terrible, hot drive?" The woman



smiled but did not extend her hand. "I'm Mrs. Boynton."

"How do you do," Natachu said politely. "I am Martha Weekoty."

"Martha?" For an instant Mrs. Boynton looked disconcerted. "Why, that's not an Indian name!"

"It's my second name," Natachu told her. "I took it when I started school."

"Oh! Well, that's lovely. I mean, it's nice you have a name we can pronounce." Mrs. Boynton smiled again, a quick, very bright smile that seemed to come more from her mouth than from her eyes. She turned to her husband. "Would you care to bring Martha's luggage up, Ted? I'm sure she would like to rest and freshen up a bit after such a dusty drive."

"That's not much of a chore; she hardly brought anything with her." Mr. Boynton picked up the bag and nodded toward the stairway. "Maybe you can cut down some of Laurie's old dresses for her."

"Oh, I'm sure we can find something," Mrs. Boynton said easily.

The stairs were carpeted and soft to the feet, and the banister was smooth to the hand. To Natachu, following the Boyntons in awed silence, the house seemed more grand than she had ever imagined a home could be. At the pueblo, the houses of the teachers and missionaries had appeared luxurious. Compared to them, the Boynton home was a mansion.

Upstairs, the hallway also was carpeted, and doors opened along it on both sides.

"Mr. Boynton and I have a room downstairs," Mrs. Boynton explained, "at the back of the house, facing the

garden. Our daughter Laurie's is there at the end of the hall. You will have this one, next to the boys'. Teddy is taking his nap; he should be up any time now. Daniel is around someplace." She opened the nearest door and preceded Natachu into a small, bright room, gesturing carelessly about her.

"The bathroom is across the hall; you'll have to share it with the boys. I've cleared out the bureau for you, except for the bottom drawer, where I'm storing some winter things. Here are your towels. There is an extra blanket on the shelf in the closet."

Mr. Boynton set the canvas bag at the foot of the bed.

"We hope you'll like it here, Martha."

"Thank you. I know I will." Natachu stared about her. "It's—it's beautiful."

"Well, not exactly beautiful," Mrs. Boynton said modestly, "but it's our home. We hope you will feel it's your home, too, while you are with us." She paused. "Have you had much experience with children?"

"At home," Natachu said, "I have three younger sisters and a little brother."

"Then caring for our two little boys will seem like nothing. Teddy's a darling, and Dan—well, he's inclined to be sulky sometimes, but he's easy to handle. Your main job will be to look after them while I am out."

"Which is most of the time," inserted her husband. "Mrs. Boynton is an officer of the Civic Club. Besides that, she's on the board of just about every charitable organization in town. It makes me tired just to see her fly about."

"I'm just a 'doer,' I guess." Mrs. Boynton looked pleased. "I like to keep on the go. Back when I was our daughter's



age, I belonged to every club in school, and the years haven't slowed me down any." She turned back to Natachu. "You'll be going to school in the mornings, but you'll be through at three-thirty, in time to pick Teddy up at his nursery school. Once you get home, I'd like you to straighten around a bit, get the boys bathed and into their pajamas, and then baby-sit in the evenings. When you get more used to our ways, you may be able to start dinner for me. It won't run into too much work, really—it's just a matter of being here."

Mr. Boynton put a hand on his wife's shoulder. "Let's give Martha a chance to get herself settled," he suggested. "You can fill her in on details of the daily routine later."

"Of course. Let us know, Martha, if we've overlooked anything. I think I told you, those are your towels. The soap is in the linen closet. Do you have enough hangers in the closet—"

And then they were gone. Suddenly, miraculously, the room was empty. Slowly, in the silence, Natachu looked about her. This—she thought—this is my room. This is where I am to sleep tonight and every night.

The bedspread was pale yellow. She placed a hand on it and pressed, and the mattress beneath pressed firmly back. She moved forward and touched the curtains, crisp and white at the windows.

This is where I am to stay.

Across the street, looking back at her, was another house, much like the one in which she now stood. It had a circular driveway and a side yard with green grass and flowers. Sprinklers were going on the lawn, and the after-



noon sunlight caught the spray of water and turned it into rainbows against the blue New Mexico sky.

This morning, Natachu thought wonderingly, I stood on our rooftop and looked out across the mesa. The house was red adobe, and the dust made swirls in the streets. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that I am really here.

And yet, in a way, it was as though she had been preparing for it all her life.

"Why is it," her mother had asked her, "that you spend so much time at the mission? What is the reason that you stay so long at school after classes are over? What is it that you find to talk about with these white people—these Bahanas, who are not of your blood—who know so little of our ways?"

"We don't talk of anything special," Natachu had told her. She had hesitated before continuing, "They have been so many places."

"Who—the Nelsons?"

"Yes, the Nelsons, and Mrs. Huffman, my teacher. She even spent two years studying in Europe. She has so many books that they cover the whole side wall of her living room."

"And so, she chooses to live here at the pueblo instead of in these foreign places? She is a sensible woman."

"She lives here," said Natachu, "in order to teach us. But she is not *of* us. Her mind is separate. It moves away. It is filled with other things."

"A mind is large enough for only so much," her mother remarked dryly.

"But it shouldn't be. It should be stretched to hold more. Sometimes I feel as though my mind were a tiny seed in

a jar, all withered up, waiting in the storage room." She sought for words. "I want to take it out and plant it and let it grow."

"That is silly talk," her mother told her. "Do not let your grandmother hear you say such odd things."

"Someday," Natachu said stubbornly, "I will plant it." How she knew, she was not certain. But she knew.

When it had happened, it had been quickly. Less than two weeks ago, she had been leaving the mission after Sunday service when Mr. Nelson had called to her.

"Martha? Can you wait a minute? I want to talk to you about something."

"Of course, Mr. Nelson." She turned to Duvangyamsi, who was walking beside her. "Go on along, if you want to. I'll catch up with you in the plaza."

Duvangyamsi appeared to hesitate. "Are you certain that is a good idea? After all, Matcito is waiting there. I might just decide to walk off with him."

"If you do," exclaimed Natachu in mock anger, "I will never speak to you again!"

Both girls burst out laughing, and Duvangyamsi gave her friend's arm a quick pat.

"You know how little you have to worry about with that young man. He hasn't looked at another girl since he climbed out of his cradle."

"But there is always the danger that he might begin to!" Natachu spoke the words, but she did not mean them. She was smiling when she turned back to wait for Mr. Nelson.

The little gray-haired missionary was at the front of the room, gathering together the notes from which he had



made his sermon. His wife, a plump, gentle-faced woman, was still at the piano. Several of the smaller children had gathered around her and were asking in chirping voices for "Just one more time of 'Jesus Loves Me.'"

Watching them, Natachu felt a quiet rise of affection for the earnest couple with their prayer books and their hymnals. How many times in the years of her growing up had she come to them with questions, things she would never have asked her own parents, much as she loved them.

"How?" she would ask, or "Why?" and the Nelsons would tell her. Or, if they did not know, they would look up the answers. They were not like her mother, whose answer was always, "What is the difference? What is, is. Asking how and why cannot change things."

It cannot change things, no, but it can change *me*, thought Natachu.

"Martha!" Mr. Nelson was coming toward her, his face bright with pleasure. "It went well today, didn't you think? We had three more people than we had last week. That makes fourteen. Fourteen souls redeemed for Christ!"

"It was fine, Mr. Nelson." Natachu tried to think of something encouraging to add. It seemed to her that fourteen souls, out of over a hundred sprawling families, was not really too great a salvation. The missionary, however, appeared to be pleased about it. "The music was lovely. A lot more of the children will be coming, now that we have a piano."

"The music—ah, yes." Mr. Nelson nodded happily. "If only we had a few more voices like yours, my dear, we



could have a choir. A choir, right here at the pueblo! Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

"It would," Natachu answered sincerely. A flutter of excitement stirred within her at the idea. "People could not possibly stay away from the services if we had music."

"Yes, music," Mr. Nelson said fondly. "It means a lot to you, doesn't it, child? And learning—learning about all kinds of things."

"Yes." Natachu was surprised at the turn the conversation was taking.

"I've been talking to your teacher, Mrs. Huffman," Mr. Nelson continued. "She says you are at the top of your class here. She says you have great capabilities, great potential." He paused, his face growing suddenly serious. "The school here at the pueblo operates under a big handicap. Most of our children start the first grade without even knowing the language. Many of them, like your friend Matcito, drop out before graduation, and of the rest, most go into farming or jewelry making. The classes have to be geared to the majority."

"Yes, sir," Natachu said again, this time in bewilderment. The things he was stating were things she knew, things everyone knew. What point was there in repeating them?

"A student like you needs more than this. Mrs. Huffman feels that you have the kind of mind which would benefit from higher education. Tell me, Martha, have you ever given thought to the possibility of attending college?"

"Collegel" Natachu repeated the word as though she were not sure she had heard it correctly. "College costs money."

"There are scholarships," Mr. Nelson told her. "The United Pueblo Agency in Albuquerque has a Credit-Loan department which gives grants to deserving Indian youngsters. They have to be able to prove that they need financial assistance and be highly recommended by their school authorities, but you would have no trouble with those requirements. Your problem would come with the College Entrance Exams."

Natachu felt the surge of hope which had been rising within her sink again into the pit of her stomach. "You don't think I could pass them?"

"Not with the education you have been getting here. You would be competing with students from all high schools. You wouldn't be well enough prepared. Mrs. Huffman feels that, if you spent your senior year in a good public high school in Albuquerque, if you studied there and really applied yourself, you could probably pass the examinations without too much difficulty. You *would* qualify for a scholarship, Martha."

"Albuquerque," Natachu said doubtfully, "is hundreds of miles away."

"Only a half day's drive, really. Of course, it would be impossible for you to commute. You would have to live there."

"It's impossible." Natachu shook her head decidedly. "My family would never move away from the pueblo. This is their life. It is all they know."

"They couldn't move, but *you* could. That is, if you wanted to." Mr. Nelson shuffled through his raft of papers and drew out an envelope. "Yesterday, I received this letter from a friend of mine, a Mr. Theodore Boynton, an



electrical engineer for Sandia Corporation. He wants to know if I can recommend a young girl from the pueblo to come to Albuquerque for the school year to live with his family and do light housework and help with the younger children. There would be no pay, but for room and board and a chance to attend a good high school, I should think it would be very much worthwhile for you. Are you interested, Martha?"

"Interested? Oh, Mr. Nelson!"

How well she remembered her first trip into Albuquerque! It had been years ago, soon after her Uncle Leeka's return from Korea. Glowing with pride in his beautiful blue uniform and rich with money he had earned in the Air Force, he had driven the whole family in to the State Fair. Natachu could still remember the excitement of the morning, the cold wind whipping against her face as she and the other children crouched under blankets in the back of the pickup truck, the long black highway unraveling behind them, the red cliffs growing blacker and the hills flattening out to desert. She could remember the entrance into the city itself, the traffic, the mammoth buildings, the stores with their bustling crowds.

She had been to Albuquerque several times since, with the Nelsons, and once Mrs. Huffman had taken her in to a concert. She had never managed to outgrow her feeling of excitement.

"I think you are exactly the girl the Boyntons are looking for," Mr. Nelson was saying. "If you feel you are interested—"

"Yes! Oh, yes!" She breathed the words. "To live there—"



to go to school there— Oh, do you really think they would take me?”

Mr. Nelson smiled warmly. “Run along home and talk to your parents about it. If they will give their permission, I’ll write Mr. Boynton tonight.”

“They will give permission,” said Natachu. “They *must*.”

As she left the mission and walked slowly toward the plaza, the surprise of the offer was still upon her, but there was something else as well—a sense of inevitability. Someday—somehow—she had always known that she would leave the pueblo. Now the time and the opportunity had come.

The red clay street wound crookedly between the red clay buildings. On a nearby rooftop, a man was napping, one arm thrown up to shield his face from the autumn sun. In the yard across from him, a woman was chopping wood, her arms rising and falling in slow rhythm, her body swaying forward and backward with the weight of her labor. A flock of chickens moved about her, pecking futilely at the splinters of wood that fell in their direction. At the house behind them, a small, half-naked child crouched in the doorway, tracing with his finger in the thick red dust.

Nobody hurried, no one rushed or shouted, the town lay quiet as though lost in a dream. This same woman, Natachu thought, has been chopping wood in this way for years and years, and before that her mother had done exactly the same thing, in the same yard, and before that *her* mother. That man over there has been napping for centuries on his rooftop. That child will grow, and he in

his turn will nap on rooftops, and his son will sit and draw pictures in the dust of that doorway.

Time was nothing to the Pueblo People. It wound like thread from an endless spool, punctuated by nothing but the change of the seasons. Fall, winter, spring, summer—and fall again. A year gone by, another crop to harvest; another baby, perhaps, in the cradle that swung from ropes from the beam across the adobe ceiling of that house.

I am part of this, Natachu thought; part of it, yet not in the way that Duvangyamsi is, or Matcito. They will be happy here for as long as they live. But I have looked at books; I have heard a concert. I cannot stand here century after century, a clock without hands, while somewhere in the world life is going on, moving ahead, people are living and learning and doing things.

In Albuquerque, there is another world. I will be able to know it—to be a part of it! This is my chance!

Suddenly, the excitement was too much for her. She hastened her footsteps, breaking the slow, sedate tread which was the movement of her people. Hurrying, almost running, she rounded a curve and spotted Duvangyamsi and a square-shouldered young man standing together on the far side of the square.

The two of them turned toward her, and the boy started forward to meet her, asking, "What took you so long? We were beginning to think you weren't coming."

Natachu turned her own face to the dark, handsome one bent above her, and her heart was singing with such excitement that she could not contain the news for even a moment.



"Matcitol!" she cried. "Wait until I tell you! The most wonderful thing has happened!"

Now, standing in her room at the Boyntons', she recalled that Natachu of a week ago, smiling a little as though at a child of another age. The dust-filled streets, the clay buildings, the smoking chimney pots beside the pole ladders—all of these were behind her. It would be a long time before she would see these things again.

Her eyes fell upon her bag, standing where Mr. Boynton had placed it at the foot of the bed.

I must unpack, she thought. That is the first thing.

Unzipping the bag, she began to remove her belongings, placing them neatly on hangers in the huge, empty closet—two cotton blouses, two skirts, a blue wool sweater. At the bottom of the bag was her fiesta dress. She withdrew it slowly, holding it up before her—the loose cotton blouse, the wide silk skirt of red and gold, the heavy black shawl with its fine embroidery and deep fringe. Now, why had she brought it? What possible use would there be for it here?

Slowly, she moved her hands over the richness of the material, remembering its last wearing as she stood with Duvangyamsi on the edge of the plaza watching the summer dances. But that was time past. Carefully, she placed the dress upon a hanger and shoved it to the far end of the closet.

Her remaining belongings—some socks and underwear, a brush and comb, a toothbrush, and several pieces of silver and turquoise jewelry which her uncle had made for her—she removed from the bag and placed in the top drawer of the bureau.



Outside the sunny afternoon had faded into twilight. I suppose, thought Natachu, it is time for me to go downstairs.

She moved toward the door—and hesitated, halted by a sudden reluctance to leave the sanctuary of the now familiar room. In the house below, a family was waiting, a white family with their white ways, their white customs. There was an evening to spend with them, and tomorrow a full day, and days and weeks and months after that. To Natachu, who had seldom before thought in terms of months, they rose ahead in suddenly overpowering numbers.

This, she told herself sternly, is ridiculous. After all, it is what I have wanted, what I have wished for. This is the new world I have been longing to know.

And still she hesitated, her hand resting lightly on the knob of the door.

There was a light tap, and the knob began to turn beneath her fingers. With a gasp, Natachu jumped backward and watched as the door moved slowly open a few inches. A pair of blue eyes appeared at waist level, peering curiously through the crack.

As understanding swept over her, she jerked the door open the remainder of the way and found herself staring down into the startled faces of two small boys.

After an instant, the smaller one smiled.

"We were just looking," he said innocently. "We wanted to see if you had feathers."

"Well, I don't," said Natachu. "Only on very special occasions. And I don't go around wearing war paint either." She dropped to her knees, feeling her irritation

vanish as she gazed into the small, round face. "I guess you must be Teddy."

"Yes." The child nodded with satisfaction.

The other boy was taller, more gangling, as though he had lost too early the soft, appealing look of childhood. His eyes, behind thick glasses, regarded her warily.

"I'm Daniel."

"I'm glad to meet you, Teddy and Daniel." Natachu smiled at them. "Your mother says that I'm to help take care of you. My name is Martha."

Teddy's face fell in disappointment.

"You can't be a real Indian. You don't even have an Indian name."

"I used to," Natachu told him, "but I don't any longer. Not here, anyway. From now on, my name is just Martha."

From the living room below came the sound of a stereo playing. A glass clinked against a table top. A telephone rang, and there was a rustle of newspaper as someone got up to answer it. From the kitchen came the whirring hum of an electric blender.

Natachu went into the bathroom and washed her face. The washcloth was soft and pink and the faucets were gleaming and the floor was black and white checkered tile.

Outside it was almost dark.

It could be postponed no longer. Followed by the two little boys, Martha Weekoty went down the stairs to the new world awaiting her below.





THREE PLACES had been set at the kitchen table.

Mrs. Boynton, who had been standing by the oven, turned quickly when Martha came in. She smiled brightly, but with what might have been a shade of apology.

"I know you must be hungry after such a long ride. Since Laurie isn't home yet, we're delaying our dinner. I thought you might like to go ahead and eat with the children."

The little boys clambered noisily into their places. Martha took hers more slowly, gazing with awe about her.

The kitchen was tremendous. Everything from the vinyl floor to the topmost cabinet appeared immaculate and newly polished. A row of shiny copper-bottomed pans hung by their handles in the space above the spotless stove top. The formica counters and the gleaming aluminum sink looked like an illustration from one of the women's magazines that the trader brought in monthly sieges into the pueblo.

Mrs. Boynton stooped and drew a flat glass dish from the depths of the oven. With a frilly apron tied neatly over the slim lines of her tailored dress and with her high-heeled pumps and pearl earrings, she herself could have been an illustration from a magazine.

"I hope you like shrimp," she said, setting the steaming casserole on the table. "Now that you are with us, perhaps we will have a chance to try some Indian dishes."

"I—I can try—to cook some." Thinking of the black iron stove, the outdoor oven where, for as long as she could remember, she had helped her mother bake the weekly bread, Martha glanced about the kitchen with a feeling of panic.

"I'm sure we would enjoy it." Mrs. Boynton drew Teddy's plate toward her and began to serve the shrimp.

Eying the bubbling pink mixture on its nest of rice, Martha thought nostalgically of the mutton and hominy which was undoubtedly being consumed back at the pueblo. For dessert there would be packaged cookies and soda pop. With a twinge of distaste, she regarded the glass of milk beside her plate. How could people actually down this flat, white stuff when they could be drinking soda!

"Do Indians eat with knives and forks," Daniel asked curiously, "or do they use their fingers?"

"Dan, what a rude question!" his mother exclaimed severely. "What is Martha going to think of you!"

"I was just asking." Dan ducked his head, his eyes on his plate. A muscle at the side of his cheek twitched nervously. "Teddy asked her if she wore feathers. She didn't get mad."

"Teddy asked that?" Mrs. Boynton's face softened. Her



mouth dimpled at the corners, as though she were restraining a smile. "Well, Teddy's still a baby. You're old enough not to ask personal questions. You'll have to excuse them, Martha. They know so little about—your people."

"We do eat with knives and forks," Martha said quietly.

Using her silverware with careful precision, she lifted a forkful of shrimp to her mouth. For one horrible instant she wondered if she was going to be able to swallow it. Then, with effort born of desperation, she did so.

"What's the matter?" Teddy was regarding her with interest. "Don't you like it?"

"Of course," Martha replied quickly. "It's just—just—"

She was not going to admit to this wide-eyed four-year-old that she had never tasted shrimp before.

"I had a big lunch," she said. "I'm not very hungry."

"I don't like shrimp either," said Daniel. He spoke softly so that his mother did not hear him. Raising his face, he looked directly at Martha. "I hate them," he whispered.

From the direction of the living room there came the sound of the front door opening and banging loudly closed again. Mr. Boynton's voice rose in greeting, and, an instant later, another voice lifted and rang gaily through the house.

"Mother! Oh, Mother—I'm home!"

"Out here, darling!" Mrs. Boynton's face brightened, and she reached behind her and began untying the apron. "Come out to the kitchen, Lauriel! I want you to meet someone."

"Right-o! As soon as I dump my packages!"

There was a rustle and a thumping, as though a gigantic load were being deposited on chairs and tables.

"What did you do," Mr. Boynton asked caustically, "buy out every store in Albuquerque?"

"Oh, Daddy! You know I needed school clothes! I didn't buy a single thing that wasn't absolutely necessary!"

The laugh was contagious, warm and lilting. There was a click of shoes in the hallway, and there appeared at the door of the kitchen the loveliest girl that Martha had ever laid eyes upon.

Laurie Boynton looked like her mother. That was evident immediately in her height and slenderness, in the blonde hair and fair skin and the delicate, almost ethereal bone structure. Her eyes were as blue as Teddy's, and the lashes were so long and black that they cast shadows upon the curve of her cheek.

She went at once to her mother and kissed her and turned to speak to her brothers. It was only then that she saw Martha.

For one startled instant she stood staring without speaking. The smile seemed to hang suspended on her lips.

"Darling," Mrs. Boynton said, "this is Martha Weekoty. She is going to stay with us this winter. She wants to go to school here in Albuquerque, and, in her spare time, she'll help me with the housework and the children." She put her arm around her daughter and drew her forward. Pride was evident on her face. "Martha—my daughter, Laurie."

In a kind of hypnotized wonder, Martha watched the girl's beautiful face change before her. The blue eyes, which had narrowed perceptively, now widened with a



practiced guilelessness. The smile steadied and took on warmth.

"I'm happy to know you, Martha," Laurie said graciously. "I do hope you will like it here."

The words were almost exactly the ones her father had spoken earlier. With a sense of repetition, Martha heard herself giving the same answer.

"Thank you. I know I will."

She got to her feet, pushing her chair back from the table. The boys had finished their dinners already and scrambled down. Martha could hear them now in the living room, roughhousing with their father.

"Would you like for me to do the dishes," Martha asked hesitantly, "or put the children to bed?"

"Why, how nice!" Mrs. Boynton seemed pleased. "I wasn't going to ask you to start your duties until tomorrow, but it would be a help if you could tuck the boys in for me. Then, I know, you'll want to get some rest yourself. This must have been a long and tiring day for you."

Upstairs in the children's room, Martha buttoned Teddy into his pajamas. The procedure was not a new one to her.

"I have a brother," she told him, "who is just a little older than you are. His name is Benjamin."

"Benjamin?" Teddy's ever-present curiosity leaped immediately to the fore. "That's not an Indian name either. Isn't Benjamin an Indian?"

"An Indian child can have several different names," explained Martha. "The first, of course, is the one he is born with. His grandmother usually gives him that one. It's a special name, used only by his friends and his family. Then, when he starts to school, he takes another. I

gave Benjamin his second name. I got it out of the Bible."

"Oh!" Teddy considered this for a moment. "I would like to meet Benjamin. Do you think he could come and play with me?"

"Oh, someday maybe," Martha told him. "He lives quite far away, you know."

"Then it will be a long time before you see him either?"

"Yes," Martha answered softly.

She let her mind go to Benjamin, to the way he had looked at her when she told him good-by.

"Are you coming back?" he had asked.

The question had startled her. "Of course. Of course, I'll be back. What a silly thing to ask me."

"*She* says you won't," Benjamin had answered. "*She* says you'll turn two-heart."

"She is wrong," said Natachu. She had not had to ask who "*She*" was. "Grandmother cannot tell everything. She isn't magic, Benjito."

"But, she is our grandmother," said Benjamin gravely.

To Natachu, the words, spoken in this same quiet tone, were like the fall of familiar rain, like the bleat of the sheep on the mesa or the wail of wind against the door. It was the background sound of her childhood:

"She is Grandmother. She is the head of the family. Whatever your grandmother decides is right."

The little old woman with her rope of black hair, with her sharp-boned, hawklike face—how many millions of years had she been ruling over the household of the Week-otys! To Natachu as a child, it had seemed that she must surely have been there when the world began. She had been born in the pueblo and had raised her family there,



Natachu's mother and her sister and three brothers. When the two daughters had married, they had brought their husbands into the family. Natachu's father, as was the custom, had added new rooms to the rambling adobe house, one for himself and his wife and others later, with the coming of the children.

The husband of Natachu's aunt also had added rooms. In addition to these, he had constructed a workbench in the main family room, where he could practice his craft of silversmith.

Of the three uncles, only one, Leeka, remained in the house of his mother. The other two had married and moved away to the homes of their wives.

"I am your grandmother!" How often the words had been spoken! How quickly the children had leapt to obey the fierce old voice.

This last time, however, Natachu had said, "No."

Quietly, flatly, she had uttered her ultimatum. "No, Grandmother, I am sorry. I cannot give up this opportunity. I must go to Albuquerque."

In the stunned silence that followed, the words seemed to echo and re-echo throughout the room, bouncing back and forth from walls to floor to ceiling. Glancing about at the shocked faces of her family, Natachu felt her heart pounding within her.

"Natachu Weekoty!" The old woman rose slowly from her seat. Tiny and wrinkled and sightless though she was, there was nothing even vaguely pathetic about the figure that stood before them. The room seemed to shrink as the dynamic presence filled and dominated it. "Natachu Weekoty—I am your grandmother!"

"Yes." Natachu pressed her hands tightly against her sides to keep them from trembling. "Yes, Grandmother. I am sorry, but I must go."

"Must? You say 'must' to *me*! Already she speaks as a Bahana—a white child with no respect for her elders—even here in the home of her grandmother, in the land of her own people! What will she be if she goes to the white man's world, away from her upbringing? What can we expect of her then?"

"I won't be going to stay," Natachu said hurriedly. "Only for schooling. There is so much to learn, so much that I will never know if I stay here!"

"There is much you can learn here at the pueblo that you will never learn elsewhere. There are the traditions and customs of your people. There are the ancient and beautiful truths which you have not found yet, my daughter, and which you will never find if you do not stay here and search for them. What does the white world have to offer which can compare with these?"

"The white world is alive!" Natachu threw the words out in a kind of desperation. "It moves! It does things! It is the way I am made, Grandmother. I cannot just sit here—"

"The way you are made?" The old woman held out her hands. "Come here, Natachu."

Slowly, against her will, the girl went to her. She stood quiet while the gnarled fingers touched her hair—moved across the breadth of her forehead—traced with a feather-like gentleness the high, sharp curve of her cheekbones.

"The way you are made," her grandmother repeated softly. "It has been many years since my eyes have seen



your face, but my hands know it well, for it is exactly like my own, like your mother's and your aunt's and your sisters'. You are one of us. You belong here, here in your own world with the people who love you. Do you think you will be loved in the white world? Do you think it will understand you? Do you think it will even try?"

"But that is not what is important!" cried Natachu. "It is that *I* understand! Think of the knowledge I will have when I return to the pueblo!"

"You will have nothing." The gentleness left the old woman's voice. "You will *be* nothing—a two-heart—neither white nor Indian. You will have neither one world nor the other."

"Mother! Father!" Natachu turned to her parents. It was a last desperate effort; not for a moment did she expect to find there anything but condemnation.

To her amazement, she saw in her mother's face a look of sympathy.

"Other young people leave the pueblo," the latter said slowly. "Leeka was in the Air Force. It did not hurt him. In fact, since his return he has been earning good money with the training he received there." She turned to her husband. "What are your feelings?"

"Well, now—" Like most Indian men, Natachu's father was seldom called upon for domestic decisions. He glanced across at Grandmother and shrugged his shoulders. "I should not think it would hurt her."

For an instant it seemed as though the room would explode with silence. An arm's length away from her, Natachu watched her grandmother stiffen. The arrogant

old face tightened with a combination of bewilderment and fury.

"You defy me!" Her voice cracked sharply. "You—all of you—you dare defy me!"

Natachu's mother crossed over to the old woman and gently placed an arm around her. "We would never defy you, Mother," she said softly. "It is only that—this one time—we believe that, perhaps, you are mistaken."

Now, at the Boyntons', Martha relived that moment, feeling, as she had then, a mixture of emotions. Happiness, yes—exhilaration—excitement and gratification. A battle had been won; opposition had been conquered. And yet, at the same time, there was another feeling, strange and a little frightening.

A sense of loss—but loss of what?

Before her eyes, her grandmother had seemed to shrink a little, and the room about her had grown larger.

"I'm not at all sleepy," said Teddy.

Brought back to the present by the child's voice, Martha smiled at him and reached over to straighten the top of his pajamas. Beneath her fingers, his body was sturdy and solid. Her brother Benjamin was thinner. Although he was older than Teddy—actually in years he was closer to Daniel—he was smaller, his chest narrower, his arms and legs more bony. His hair was straight and black, a complete contrast to Teddy's blond crew cut, and his eyes were dark almond.

Still, for all the differences, they bore each other a remarkable resemblance. If they stood side by side, in pajamas, with their little-boy innocence and their bright,



eager, "I-don't-want-to-go-to-bed-yet" faces, they would appear absurdly identical.

It was then that Martha became conscious that someone was watching her. How she knew, she was not certain; it was simply a feeling like a light pressure between her shoulder blades.

She turned to find Daniel standing in the doorway.

After a moment he said, "I brushed my teeth."

"Fine! You're ready for bed too, then."

Crossing the room to his bed, he took off his glasses and laid them carefully on the night table. Without them, his face seemed to lose its sharpness and become oddly vulnerable. As he turned back the covers, Martha went over to him.

"Do you want me to help you?"

"No." He got into bed and settled back on his pillow. His voice held a note of careful unconcern. "You like Teddy, don't you?"

"Why, of course." Martha was surprised.

"Everybody likes Teddy," Daniel said matter-of-factly. "He's so cute."

Teddy, bouncing on his own bed, beamed enchantingly. "I want to kiss my mommy!"

"All right," Martha told him. "I'll go and tell her you're ready."

She was smiling as she left the room, her feet soft on the moss-green carpet. It was not until she had reached the head of the stairs that she became aware of the voices, or, rather, of one voice—Laurie's. It came, sudden and sharp, from the room off the hallway below.

"How could you do it? That's what I don't understand.

How in the world could you possibly do such a thing to me!"

"Now, Daughter." Her father's voice was a low rumble. "I can't see that there is anything for you to be so upset about. We all know that your mother has been needing some help around here for a long time now. *You* certainly don't stick around enough to give her any, what with all your dates and club meetings and cheerleading practice."

"Now, Ted!" Mrs. Boynton broke in quickly. "There's no need to bring that into it. I *want* Laurie to take part in social activities, just as I did at her age. She'll only be young once, you know. It's wonderful that she's so busy and popular."

"All right, so it's wonderful. If you're satisfied to have it that way, far be it from me to object to it. But why should she object to my bringing in outside help when she herself isn't giving any?"

"I don't object to your getting help for Mother!" Now it was Laurie who interrupted. "I think it's fine. Everybody who is anybody has servants. But why couldn't you just go out and hire somebody, like other people do, somebody who could wear a white uniform and wait on the table and be a maid? This girl will be going to school with me!"

"This girl," Mr. Boynton said quietly, "is named Martha. You might as well get used to calling her by name, Laurie. And she will not only be in school with you, she will probably be giving you help with your homework. From the report Mr. Nelson gave me, she is a brilliant girl, with a tremendous amount of ability."

"I'm sure she is, Ted," Mrs. Boynton agreed. "She seems



to be nice too—well-mannered and clean and everything. When you suggested this idea of bringing her in from the pueblo, it did seem practical. Now that she's here, though, I do understand what Laurie means about its being—well—awkward. She isn't a servant exactly, but she isn't a guest, either. It's difficult to know just how to think of her."

"Think of her as a teen-age girl," Mr. Boynton said bluntly, "just like Laurie. And as for *you*, young lady, you are going to be nice to Martha. Take her places, introduce her to your classmates, see that she is happy here. We are responsible for that, you know, just as we are for her education."

"Daddy!" Laurie gave a horrified gasp. "Daddy, you don't mean it! What will the kids say? I can't possibly—"

"Of course, I mean it." There was obviously no arguing with Mr. Boynton. "Be a friend to her. She's the same age that you are. It might be a grand experience for you—almost like having a sister."

"A sister!"

To Martha, at the top of the stairs, the silence that followed seemed to last an eternity.

When she heard Laurie speak again, the voice was almost unrecognizable, low and bitter.

"I'll be polite to her, Daddy; I don't have much choice. And if I have to drag her around school with me, I guess I can stand it somehow. But never, never, as long as I live, am I going to be a sister to an *Indian!*"

## 3



THE DAY OF SCHOOL registration, it was raining. Mr. Boynton drove the girls to the high school on his way to work, dropping Daniel first at his grammar school and Teddy, whose nursery classes had started several days before, at his kindergarten.

Watching the slice of water against the windshield and the splash of puddles as the car wheels struck them in the hollows by the curbs, Martha was grateful for the providence that had prevented the day from being fair and sunny. It was awkward enough to be riding with Laurie in the family automobile, on the way to the same destination; to have had to walk with her the entire distance to school would have been unbearable.

It was almost a week since Martha's arrival at the Boynton home, and during that time, in all fairness, she had to admit to herself that Laurie had been nothing but courteous. True to her promise to her father, she had been entirely polite and pleasant. In fact, to Martha, quiet herself and used to the innate reserve of her own people, there



might not have seemed anything amiss if she had not overheard that conversation in the living room. It was too late when she suddenly realized she was eavesdropping and fled upstairs.

Having heard it, however, she was unable to forget it. Every time Laurie looked at her, smiled, or threw a few words of conversation in her direction, she recalled again the distaste in the usually lilting voice when it spoke the word "Indian."

Now, alone in the back seat, which she had been sharing with the two little boys, Martha sat gazing at the girl in the seat before her. Turned sideways, talking to her father, Laurie's face was thrown into profile against the gray of the windowpane. In her neat tan trench coat and bright-colored rain scarf, she looked gay and pretty and ready for anything.

The trench coat was one of the many items of clothing that had been in the pile of packages containing purchases the day of Martha's arrival.

"Everyone has one," Laurie had explained to her father. "Nobody, but nobody, is wearing those plastic deals anymore. After all, Daddy, this year I'm a senior!"

"It seems to me seniors make for pretty expensive upkeep," Mr. Boynton had grumbled. Later, however, when she had modeled the coat for him, he had given her an affectionate pat and said, "You look like a glamorous, blonde, secret espionage agent."

Martha herself was grateful for the discarded plastic raincoat which she had inherited with the event of the new purchase. Eying the sheet of rain between the park-

ing lot and the high school, she pulled it closer around her and adjusted the hood.

"If it's still raining when you're ready to come home," Mr. Boynton remarked thoughtfully, "you'd better phone your mother to come pick you up. This doesn't look as though it's going to clear very quickly."

"Oh, that won't be necessary, Daddy." Laurie leaned over and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. "Mother has her Women's Service League meeting at the house on Tuesdays. We'll get a ride with somebody, don't worry."

"Well, if you're certain—"

"Of course, we will! The boys are seniors this year too, remember. Some of them have *cars!*" She laughed and threw open the door, pausing long enough to glance at the silent girl in the back seat. "Ready, Martha? Let's make a dash for it."

"I'm coming." Clambering out of the car and closing both her door and Laurie's, Martha ran through the rain to the protection of the overhang at the side of the building.

When she reached the doorway, Laurie was already standing there, untying her scarf and shaking the drops of water from the new coat. "I made out my schedule card last spring," she said casually, "but, since you're a new student, I suppose you'll have to do it today. The principal's office is down the hall and to your right, past the trophy case, and then left in sort of an alcove." She paused, studying Martha's face. "Do you think you can find it?"

"I guess so."

Gazing into the milling throng that crowded the hall-



way, it seemed to Martha that she had never seen so much confusion in her entire life. Young people were shouting and greeting each other, opening and slamming lockers, rushing back and forth with armloads of books. The hall itself seemed to stretch on forever, and stairways on either side proclaimed more and similar hallways on floors above.

With a feeling of growing panic, she turned back to Laurie. "Did you say to the right? And how far after that? Is there a room number?"

"It's past the trophy case," Laurie began impatiently, and then, with an obvious effort, she stopped herself. "Come along—I'll take you."

As the two left the sanctuary of the entranceway, the noise and confusion seemed to close in all about them. To Martha, almost a head shorter than her companion, it was as though they were charging upstream against a river of humanity.

Hurrying along at Laurie's side, she was amazed at the number of voices that rose in greeting.

"Hi, Laurie!"

"Laurie Boynton! Did you have a good summer?"

"Oh, Laurie—are you going to try out for cheerleader again this year?"

Turning quickly from one side to the other, Laurie tossed out smiles and answering greetings of her own.

"Hi, there! A wonderful summer, thank you; broiling, though, wasn't it? Sure, I'm trying for cheerleader; isn't everybody?"

The two girls turned right, turned left, and then came to a stop in a curved alcove.

"This is it," Laurie said. "The principal's office."

At that moment, the door swung open and two boys emerged, chuckling together over something. The taller one with the broad shoulders stopped suddenly, his face lighting up with pleased recognition.

"Laurie! Hey, girl, how are you? Al, do you know Laurie Boynton? If you don't, you ought to."

"Hello, Laurie. I'm Alan Wallace." The second boy looked almost elfin beside his companion. He was short and slightly built, and on first glance the only thing notable about him was his freckles.

"I'm glad to meet you, Alan." Laurie nodded at him politely, but it was the other boy who held her full attention. "Chuck," she said chidingly, "I thought you had forgotten me entirely. A whole summer, and not a single phone call!"

"I wasn't here, sweetie; had a job on a dude ranch. Had to do something to keep myself in shape for football." Chuck grinned, his teeth a flash of white against the deep tan of his face.

Laurie's response was charming and deliberate. Her eyes widened, and her face dimpled with a lovable impishness which reminded Martha startlingly of Teddy.

"Well, then, I guess I'll have to forgive you. It's not everybody who's captain of the football team."

"Hey, look, girl—" Chuck flushed happily. Then, suddenly, he seemed to notice Martha's presence. "Is this a friend of yours?"

Laurie drew in her breath sharply. For one awful second Martha wondered if she were going to deny their acquaintanceship entirely. Almost immediately, however, she realized that she had misjudged her companion.



"This," Laurie said brightly, "is Martha Weekoty. She's a new student, and I'm showing her how to find the principal's office." She paused, as though contemplating the possibility of stopping there; then, determinedly, she plunged on the rest of the way. "Martha is going to be staying with us this winter. This is her first time in Albuquerque."

The words were all there, exactly as they should have been. They were gracious and kind and friendly. It was the meaning behind them that was missing. Hearing them spoken so forcedly, Martha found herself wishing that Laurie had not said them at all.

"This," Laurie was continuing, "is Chuck Armstrong." Then, before anyone could respond, she reached over and opened the door to the office. "You'd better go ahead and arrange your schedule, Martha. I've got to go get my books."

"Where," Martha began nervously, "after I'm finished—"

"I'll meet you at the doorway where we came in. See you there in about an hour."

An instant later, Martha found herself in the quiet oasis of the principal's office.

It took only a few moments to fill out the registration card, putting down the Boyntons' address as a place of residence. The woman at the desk regarded her with curiosity.

"We don't have many Indian students in this school district. The few we do have are Navajos. Do you have your transfer papers from your school at the pueblo?"

"Yes, I do." Martha could not resist a feeling of pride

as she offered the transcripts. The woman leafed through them, casually at first and then with real interest.

"Straight A's! And, what is this about assistant teaching?"

"I helped to instruct the little ones in English," Martha explained. "Many of them come from homes where it is never spoken. Since most of the teachers don't speak our language, I helped them and their pupils to understand each other."

As she spoke, she could see before her a row of small, intent faces, could hear the childish voices repeating in singsong fashion the words she gave them:

"What is this? This is a table. What do we do with the table? We eat upon the table."

For some of them, like Benjamin, it had been easy. English had for many years been a second language in the Weekoty home. Only Grandmother refused to speak it or to have it spoken in her presence. There were homes, however, in which the language of the pueblo was the only one used, and the children from such families entered school under a severe handicap.

"What is this? This is a cake of soap. What do we do with the soap? We wash ourselves with the soap."

In homes that had only in the past five years acquired electricity and plumbing facilities, cleanliness itself had been a difficult lesson.

"We must not waste the water," Grandmother had insisted when the sink had first been installed in the front room. "We must not put it constantly upon our heads and faces. We must save it for the times that we are thirsty."



"The nurse at school," Natachu had offered timidly, "says we are to wash every day."

"The nurse!" Grandmother had spat out the words in disgust. "That one from the Indian Service! She *would* say a thing like that. She has Leeka and the other boys out in the streets gathering up tin cans and old sheepskins, and women putting plaster on the insides of their houses. She will have us use up all our water washing; then when hot weather comes, we shall die of thirst."

"There is no danger of that, Mother," Natachu's mother had offered gently. "The man who put in the pipes said that the water would keep coming. The day has passed when you have to climb down to the spring with the clay wigoro. If Natachu wishes to wash herself, it cannot hurt anything."

"Cannot *hurt* anything!" There had been a little sight, then, in Grandmother's eyes, and she had turned to Natachu, peering at her as though through a cloud of mist. "Cannot hurt her! See her hair; it is thinning already! All that water is washing the roots from her head. Before long, it will be gone entirely. She will have a head of skin shining in the sunlight, exactly like that of the school principal!"

In horror, Natachu had clapped her hands over the bulk of her thick hair.

"It's not true! It's not thinning! It isn't, is it, Mother?"

Her mother had studied her for a moment. "It doesn't seem to be. Perhaps, though, it might be best not to wash it so often. The health nurse does not have to know. After all, it is your *grandmother* who tells you this."

"The nurse gave me some medicine," Natachu had said,

"in a bottle. She says I am to put it on my head and on the heads of the babies. She says it will keep the little bugs from biting us."

"Medicine on your head!" Grandmother had been nearly beside herself with indignation. "First water and now medicine! Perhaps she would like you to cut off your head entirely! Medicine, indeed!"

"I've been using it for a couple of days now," Natachu had continued determinedly. "It works. My head hardly itches at all."

"Heads are supposed to itch," Grandmother had insisted. "It is the Great Spirit Himself who puts the little bugs there. If He did not wish us to have them. He would take them away Himself."

"Do not contradict your grandmother," Natachu's mother had said sharply, as she saw her daughter's lips parting for argument. "You must remember that she is the head of the family." But later, when the two were alone, she had asked to see the bottle and had then made a close examination of Natachu's head.

"You are right," she had mused. "The bugs are gone. I wonder if it would work as well on the heads of the babies."

The subject had not been mentioned again, but Natachu's mother had kept the bottle, and the children in the Weekoty family had been among the first in the village to be free of lice.

Bringing herself back to the present, Martha leaned forward as the woman at the desk surveyed a list of subjects.

"Are you planning on continuing to college?"

"I would like to," Natachu told her. "I am going to apply



for a scholarship grant from the United Pueblo Agency."

"Then there are several subjects you will need to take in order to pass college requirements. You should have another credit in English and one in math, and you're lacking a social science. How about American Government? That's open to seniors only."

Martha nodded, tracing with her finger down the long list of subjects. She hesitated.

"Is there a music class?"

"Music?" The woman looked surprised. "Not as a regular course. There is a chorus group which meets after school hours."

"Could I join it?" Martha asked timidly.

"It's an extra activity. You wouldn't get any credits."

"That's all right."

"You would have to try out for it. Most of the places will be filled from last year."

"I would like to try."

"Very well. I'll list it at the bottom of your schedule card. Just don't get too hopeful about it." The woman smiled kindly and handed Martha the list of classes and room numbers. "The next thing for you to do is to get your books and locker. The book room is 107."

Out in the hall again, Martha found to her relief that the violent commotion had settled down a little and was now more of a dull roar. Or maybe, she thought, I am beginning to get used to it.

Sticking close to the wall, she worked her way along the hall, checking the room numbers as she walked—103—105—107. The last was notable mainly because of the double line of students protruding from the doorway. Finding

herself a place at the end of the line, opposite an attractive, dark-haired girl, Martha turned her attention to the people around her.

Except for the Nelson boys, who lived with their parents at the pueblo, and an occasional glimpse caught during one of her infrequent trips to the city, it was the first time she had had an opportunity to observe white teenagers. The girls, she noticed, almost without exception, had short, fluffy hair, styled identically the same as Laurie's. They all wore lipstick and nail polish, and bright skirts and sweaters, or short, swirling dresses with wide belts. They giggled together and teased each other and threw surreptitious glances at the boys in line ahead of them. Conscious suddenly of her cheap blouse and the uneven hemline of her overlong skirt, Martha was glad that she was still wearing Laurie's discarded raincoat.

Moving forward slowly as the line progressed, it was not long before she found herself at the book table.

"Let's see—" One of the teachers working there scanned quickly the schedule of classes. "Algebra II—English Literature IV—American Government." The pile of books took shape rapidly on the table before her. "Now, you'll need a locker. Is there anyone in particular with whom you would like to share one?"

For a flicker of a second, Martha thought of Laurie. Then she shook her head.

"We'll assign you someone, then." The teacher turned to the pretty, dark-haired girl who was beside Martha in line. "Do you have a locker mate yet, Barbara?"

"Well, not exactly. I mean—" The girl glanced quickly at Martha and then away again. She seemed embarrassed.



"I'm sure I can find somebody. I mean, I do know lots of people from last year."

The teacher nodded. "It might be best," she said to Martha, "if we assign you an Indian student with whom you can share a locker. There are a few of them, I think, in some of the lower grades. I'll give you a locker to yourself right now, and, when an appropriate lockermate turns up, I'll let you know."

"All right," Martha agreed. She waited while the locker number and combination were being written down for her. Then she picked up her books. The dark-haired girl named Barbara, fumbling uncomfortably with the handle of her purse, avoided Martha's eyes.

For an instant it seemed to Martha that her face was familiar. Then she realized that it was only the expression. It was the same as the one on Laurie's face during that first startled moment of introduction, before the smile had come and the well-learned graciousness had taken over. And the note in this girl's voice—hadn't it been the same as the one in Laurie's when she had spoken to her father that night?

I'm wrong, Martha thought. Of course, I am wrong. There is no reason for her to dislike me.

Shoving the thought from her, she located her locker and piled the books inside. Pushing it closed, she clicked the lock into place, then turned down the hall again, toward the south door.

The overhang sheltered the entrance to the building, and beyond that the gray rain fell in a solid sheet. Even the parking lot and the driveway were little more than a tracery beyond the wall of water. Standing in the door-

way, Martha glanced around for a tan trench coat and bright-colored rain scarf. When she did not see them, she stepped back from the entrance and settled against the inside of the doorway to wait.

"That rain's turned chilly."

The voice come from close behind her. Startled, Martha turned to find a slight, elfin figure, half lost beneath the bulk of a gray slicker. She gazed at the boy blankly for a moment, until he added, "I'm Alan Wallace. I met you at the entrance to the office this morning, remember?"

"Oh, of course." Embarrassed, Martha nodded. "I'm sorry. There have been so many new faces."

The name came back to her with a surge of recognition, but the boy himself refused to emerge from memory as anything more than in indistinct blur beside the overpowering presence of Chuck Armstrong.

"Are you waiting for a ride?" Alan gazed out through the heavy downpour. "I'm going to make a dash for it and catch the city bus into town."

"I'm waiting for Laurie," Martha told him. "She's going to find us a ride."

Alan glanced at her in surprise. "But, Laurie has left already."

"She couldn't have." Martha stared at him. "She was going to meet me here."

"The two of you must have got your signals mixed," Alan commented. "She and Chuck came out together about ten minutes ago. Chuck pulled his car all the way up into the school yard to pick her up."

"You're mistaken." Martha shook her head in disbelief. "It must have been some other girl."



"Are you kidding? A girl as pretty as that one, you don't make mistakes about." He had odd-colored eyes. They were a combination of green and brown, flecked with yellow, set deep in his freckled face. Now they were regarding her with sympathy. "I wish I had a car; I'd run you home myself. Is there anyone you can call to come get you?"

"No," Martha answered.

For a moment she considered what Mr. Boynton had told Laurie as the two girls had scrambled from the car. "If it's still raining when you're ready to come home, you'd better phone your mother to come pick you up." But Laurie had responded that Mrs. Boynton would be busy with a club meeting, and besides, for Martha now there would be the problem of telephoning. The only telephone that had been available at the pueblo had been at the Trading Post, and Martha herself had never had occasion to learn to use it.

The thought of asking Alan for assistance did not even occur to her.

"I can walk."

"Walk? In this rain? You'll drown before you reach the corner!" The boy seemed genuinely concerned about her.

"I have a raincoat," said Martha. She pulled it together and snapped it at the collar. The pride of her ancestors rose within her, a familiar, quite strength.

Without another word, she straightened her shoulders and walked out into the downpour.

## 4



THE WEEKS OF September moved past, and it was October, and still the season of the two-heart continued. After the rain and a short spell of cold, the days swung again to the warmth of summer.

The seasons shifted places, shoving each other back and forth like playful children.

There will be an early harvest this year, thought Martha.

It was the kind of thought that came at strange times and for no apparent reason. She would be busy with her homework or sweeping the kitchen or working at the knots in the lace of one of Teddy's shoes, and suddenly, out of the blue, she would find herself wondering about the corn. Behind her eyes, as though by magic, she would see the fields stretching ribbon upon ribbon of green against the red earth, would see the scarecrowlike figures moving down the rows, would see her father's weary face, streaked with dirt and sweat, his eyes squinted to slits against the dust and sun. Or sometimes it would be her mother who



would come before her, kneeling over the old tin tub in the front room of the house, her strong arms moving rhythmically back and forth as she beat the clothes against the washboard. Benjamin and the little girls would be pressed around her.

The baby will soon be walking, Martha thought in sudden amazement—in another month or perhaps two. When I come home for Christmas, the baby will run to meet me.

It was strange to think of the baby growing without her, of bread baking and harvests being gathered and the slow days moving, over and over in their endless pattern, and she not there.

And yet, she was not homesick. After the first few weeks of adjustment, she found, to her relief, that she was beginning to fit quite well into the Boynton household, even to mastering the mysteries of the intricate kitchen. Mr. Boynton smiled and joked with her and treated her like a daughter. Mrs. Boynton, while never demonstrative, seemed grateful and appreciative of the help that Martha gave her.

"Really," she remarked one evening after returning late from one of her numerous meetings to find the house straightened out and a roast in the oven, "really, Martha, I don't know what we ever did without you."

"I helped." Daniel came over and stood beside his mother. "I scrubbed the potatoes."

"Were there any phone calls this afternoon?" Mrs. Boynton picked up the mail which had been left lying on the hall table.

Daniel leaned against her, nuzzling his head under her arm. "Hey, Mom, I washed the potatoes."

"Danny, dear, please stop clinging." His mother gave him an exasperated little pat. "You're too big for that sort of thing. Let Mother sit down for a little and just relax."

"Was it a busy day, Mother?" Laurie, herself just in from cheerleader practice, paused in the doorway. "You look pooped."

"'Pooped' isn't the word for it, darling. I'm exhausted. Our guest speaker became ill at the last moment, and I had to find a substitute. Everything was so disorganized; I had to run the whole program practically singlehanded. I feel as if I've been through a wringer!"

Mrs. Boynton threw her daughter a bright smile, as though to belie the words, but the tightness in her face and the weariness with which she sank onto the sofa supported them.

Daniel regarded her soberly from behind his glasses.

"Why," he asked, "do you do it then?"

"Do what, dear?"

"Go to meetings all the time, if you don't like them."

"Oh, Danny, you wouldn't want the kind of mother who just sits at home and gets fat and lets the years creep up on her, would you?" His mother gave a little sigh and glanced about for Teddy. "Where is my baby?"

"Upstairs, coloring," Martha told her. "He's just finished his bath. I'll go tell him you're home."

"I'll do that," Laurie offered. "I have to go up and change, anyway."

"Thank you," Martha said politely.

The relationship between the two girls had altered since



the day of the rain. The change was not a radical one on the surface; there had been no open unpleasantness. It was simply that, what had been up until then a vague, indefinable antagonism, had crystalized into an accepted reality.

Laurie had made an effort to keep this from happening. She had been her warmest, most charming self, apologizing profusely.

"Oh, Martha, I *am* sorry! Chuck and I got talking—we hadn't seen each other since last spring, you know—and he told me he wanted to show me his new car. It just completely slipped my mind that you needed a ride home also. It wasn't until I was actually here and Chuck had driven off again that I remembered, and by that time it was too late to do anything. I feel just terrible!"

The wide blue eyes held Teddy's own innocence.

"You do forgive me, don't you?"

"If you really forgot," said Martha, "there is nothing to forgive."

She met Laurie's gaze steadily with her own. It was the blue eyes, finally, that faltered.

"Of course I forgot," Laurie said uncomfortably. "You can't believe I'd deliberately go off and leave you. Look—how would you like to use my hair dryer?"

"I don't need it, thank you," answered Martha. "My hair dries very quickly." She was wet and chilled from her walk, and anger was a hard knot within her. With a proud lift of her head, she turned and started for the stairs.

She had almost reached them when Laurie's voice stopped her. It held sharp with a note of urgency. "Martha—wait a minute!"

"Yes?" She turned slowly.

Laurie's face was flushed. She raised one hand and nervously brushed a lock of fair hair back from her forehead.

"Look, you're not going to mention this to Daddy, are you? I mean, it was an accident. I know it was thoughtless of me, but you *did* manage to get home all right, anyway."

"It is not important enough to mention," said Martha.

Her voice was without expression. She turned and continued up the stairs to her room, and the subject was never referred to again.

Yet, in that instant, a wall had been constructed, a thin, transparent barrier that would not be broken. It stood between them, undisturbed by the careful façade of friendliness. Both girls were aware of its presence—and of each other's awareness.

We will never be friends, thought Martha. There was hurt and regret in the realization, but she did not dwell upon it. It was a fact; she accepted it and turned her mind to other things.

There were, indeed, other things of which to think. Major among these was schoolwork. Used to the complacent acceptance of her undisputed place at the head of the class, Martha was shaken to discover that the academic standards of her new high school were far above those to which she was accustomed. In math and social studies, she found her background knowledge so scanty that it took hours of outside study simply to keep up with the day-to-day classwork.

Miss Raye, who instructed the class in American Government, shook her head in amazement. "It's incredible



that a girl of your intelligence could have come this far without the slightest knowledge of how her country is governed. Don't your mother and father take part in our national elections?"

"I don't know," Martha admitted in embarrassment. "They never talk about it. They do vote in the pueblo elections, though."

Miss Raye looked surprised. "You have your own elections?"

"Every year we elect a governor. He and his council run the pueblo. We elect a cacique too, to be our spiritual leader, but he holds his office for life." Martha paused, then asked, "You don't know about these things?"

"No, I am learning from *you*." Miss Raye smiled at her. "We never stop learning. Always remember that, Martha. This is a huge country, a huge world. Take advantage of every opportunity. Learn about the people who live in it and the problems they face and the ways in which they are trying to solve them. Perhaps there will come a time when you will be able to solve some of them yourself."

"I?" Martha stared at her. "I, solve world problems?" Surely the woman was joking. But, no, the gentle, homely face was serious and kind.

"We each of us have our place, Martha," Miss Raye said slowly. "Each is important in his or her own way. My role as a teacher is not a major one. I don't make laws or run nations. Still, it is possible that something I may say may influence one of my *students* to do great things. It is even possible that that student may be you."

It was a short conversation, but it remained in Martha's mind for a long time afterwards. When the bulk of the

studies before her seemed too immense to tackle, she would remember these words. She did not consciously accept them, but they stayed, like a half dream, in the back of her mind, giving added significance to the work that had to be done.

Sometimes at night, in the hazy moments before sleep, she would see herself in the years ahead, a brilliant scientist or writer or statesman. Smartly dressed in a tailored suit, her hair fashionably arranged, her white gloves immaculate, she would be on a platform before a microphone, earnestly addressing a roomful of people. There would be reporters present, and photographers, and the audience would be straining forward in eager anticipation of the words that she would say.

"This is Martha Weekoty!" people would whisper. "*The Martha Weekoty.*"

And, gazing down at them, Martha would pick out faces—Mr. and Mrs. Boynton ("Did you know that Miss Weekoty actually lived with us for a short while?")—Laurie, awed and respectful—Miss Raye and Chuck Armstrong and the black-haired girl named Barbara who had not wanted to share a locker.

On occasion, the dream would change and become even more exciting. She would be a famous opera star, moving her audience to tears with her glorious singing. Because this dream was closest to her heart, Martha ventured into it more timidly than she did the others. It was only since coming to the Boyntons' that she had heard operas played on a stereo for the first time, and she felt as though a whole new world had been opened before her.

Her own parents' faces did not appear in the dream



audiences, nor did those of Duvangyamsi or Matcito. When they came, as they often did, it was in another setting, with the background of the mesa and the tiny curving streets of the village and the high arch of desert sky. It was as though there were two worlds set forever apart from each other, with Martha a groundless spirit who could move back and forth at will between them.

"I am two people," she thought in wonder, "Martha—and Natachu." It was as Natachu that she rose each morning and stood before the open window and made her prayers to the Great Power, stretching her arms above her to bring the sunbeams downward and press them into her body. As Natachu she dreamed nostalgically of piki bread and hominy and mutton; she worried about the harvest and glanced automatically at the heavens to ascertain the time of day.

It was as Martha that she became a member of the high school choral group.

Tryouts were held in the school auditorium. The whole of last year's chorus was present, and when she first saw the size of the assembled group, she felt despair sweep over her. The teacher at the registration desk had been right to be discouraging; surely there could be room for very few new members!

Glancing about her at the organized confusion of the busy room, Martha felt a panicky urge to turn and flee before anyone could notice her. The idea of singing before this group of self-assured young people was petrifying.

"You survived your hike through the rain, I see!" This time the voice was familiar.

Gratefully, Martha swung to face it. "I didn't know that you were in the chorus!"

"Sure, I am. I have been for a couple of years now. We all can't be football captains, you know."

From his perch on the window ledge, Alan Wallace grinned down at her. Why, his smile is lopsided, thought Martha in surprise, noticing it for the first time. It all goes sideways. That's what gives his face that elfish look.

She found herself smiling back at him spontaneously.

"I came to try out. I didn't realize it was so full."

"A couple of our good sopranos graduated on us. Barbara Baily is the only junior moving up. You'll have a look-in anyway." Alan slid down from the ledge to stand beside her. "Come on over to the piano. I'll introduce you to Mr. Shelby."

The choral director was leafing worriedly through a pile of music sheets. His face, when he raised it, was tense and harried. It relaxed into a look of relief when he saw Alan.

"Oh, Al—thank goodness you're here! I didn't see you come in. How about doing the accompaniments for me? Our regular pianist called in sick a couple of minutes ago."

"Sure, Mr. Shelby, I'll be glad to." Alan gestured toward Martha. "This is Martha Weekoty. She wants to try out this afternoon."

"Oh?" Mr. Shelby turned a quick, absent-minded glance in her direction. "Do you sing soprano?"

"I—" Martha hesitated. The word meant nothing to her. "I—suppose so."

"Have you had any experience singing with a group? Do you sing in your church choir?"



"Oh, yes," Martha answered quickly. Her mind flew back to the pueblo, to the tiny frame mission, with herself and a few scattered youngsters gathered around the black, upright piano. She could hear the crash of Mrs. Nelson's energetic hands on the trembling keys and the tuneless surge of untrained voices in the strains of "Jesus Loves Me."

"Good! Have a seat on the left here. We'll get to you in a few minutes."

He drew himself erect and turned to face the room, his arms raised as though already directing. Immediately, the noise and chatter fell away into silence. Alan walked around the bench and seated himself at the piano. The tryouts began.

Thinking back on it afterward, Martha could never bring the afternoon back clearly; only odd, assorted parts of it sprang out in her memory, leaving the rest a hazy blur. A sea of faces, most of them strangers, although she did recognize the girl named Barbara whom she had met in the book room—Mr. Shelby's intent frown—Alan's capable hands moving lightly over the keyboard; and, over and over in endless repetition, the rise and fall of young voices.

Some of them are lovely, Martha thought, listening. But others—

Others had something wrong with them. It was hard to say exactly what that something was. Completely untrained in the rudiments of music, she found herself struggling for an explanation. All she knew was that, in many instances, she felt her own voice straining in silent, involuntary protest against the notes as they were being de-

livered. They grated against her eardrums with a discomfort that was almost physical. It was with actual relief that she found herself on her feet at last, taking her own place beside the piano.

Alan played a note, and Martha seized and sang it. There, she thought with satisfaction as her voice held it true. There, now—that's the way it *should* sound. With a sense of astonishment, she realized that the nervousness that had besieged her upon first glimpsing the crowded room had now vanished entirely.

Why, this is easy, she thought with pleasure. This is only singing!

Singing, to Martha, was part of living; it was something she had done for as long as she could remember. "Even in your cradle," her mother had told her, "you chirped like a little bird." As a child, she had sung in the gardens and sung on the rooftops, stretching her voice up and up into the sky and sunshine. She had stood on the mesa's edge and sung prayers in the mornings. By the fire in the evenings, she had sung to the children.

"Don't *tell* stories," Benjamin always begged her. "Sing them, Natachu."

Once Matcito had been there, and he had reached out quietly and laid his fingers against her throat. There had been a soft, almost timid look on his face, which she had never seen there before.

"When you sing like that," he had said awkwardly, "you make me feel—funny." His voice had cracked on the last word, and he had dropped his eyes in embarrassment.

"How?" she had asked him softly, trying to conceal the



tremor that rose within her at the touch of his fingers. "How, funny, Matcito?"

"I don't know. Just—just funny inside. Like an ache."

He had risen then and walked hurriedly away, as though he had said much more than he had intended.

So now she sang again, and it was no different, except that it was in an auditorium and the faces before her were white ones. Her voice climbed easily upward, note on lilting note, reaching for the ceiling and the wide sky beyond it. Then she brought it down again to the place where it had started, and held it there a moment, and was done.

There was a moment of silence. Then Mr. Shelby rose from his chair and came over to the piano.

"Where," he asked, "did you study?"

"Study?" Martha regarded him with bewilderment. "I went to the school at the pueblo."

"I mean study music. Where did you receive your vocal training?" Without waiting for an answer, he turned to Alan. "Play her that new lullaby thing—the competition piece; the one with the soprano solo. Let her look it over for a minute before you begin."

"I'm sorry," Martha told him in confusion. "I don't know it. I don't know how to read it."

"You don't?" The director swung around. His face was blank with amazement. "Where is it you studied that they didn't teach you to read music?"

"Nowhere. Not any place. I've never studied singing."

The magic of the music was over; she was back to the present and a roomful of strangers. In panic, she glanced about her, wondering why she had ever come here. From

her seat in the first row, the girl named Barbara was watching her with interest.

"I didn't know you had to be able to read music to sing," Martha whispered.

"You have to know how to read music to sing group harmony." Mr. Shelby was frowning thoughtfully. "Do you really mean to tell me that you have had no vocal training at all?"

"I could help her," Alan volunteered suddenly. He was sitting very straight, his hands still resting on the keys of the piano. "With the reading part, I mean. I bet she could pick it up in no time."

"If I thought she could—" Mr. Shelby was still frowning. "It's a crime to lose a voice like that because of technicalities. Still, sight reading is a criterion. I'm not going to have time to give special side instruction."

"I'll learn!" exclaimed Martha. "I'll study and study!" Her mind, in its eagerness, skipped conveniently over the multitude of duties that filled her hours in the Boynton household. "I will learn; I promise."

"Well," Mr. Shelby said slowly, "if Alan really wants to turn teacher—"

And so it was Martha Weekoty who became a member of the high school chorus.

Several weeks later, it was Natachu whom Leeka Weekoty came to visit.



## 5



DINNER WAS OVER, the dishes were done, and Martha was in her room studying when the doorbell rang in the hall below.

It is Chuck, Martha thought, for Laurie.

Reaching up, she adjusted the shade of the floor lamp and leaned over her book again, wondering as she did so how the other girl ever managed to keep up with her studies. With her afternoons filled with extracurricular projects and Chuck Armstrong absorbing all her evenings, she seemed to be involved in a constant whirlwind of activity.

"Oh, well—" Martha moved her shoulders in a little shrug of disinterest. "It's her concern, not mine." She turned a page and, a few moments later, was deep in the intricacies of the American Government.

The knock on her door was startling and unexpected.

"Martha?" It was Daniel's voice. "You've got company. There's a man downstairs to see you."

"What?" Martha was sure that she had not heard him

correctly. "Come in, Danny, and tell me again. Did you say there is someone here to see *me*?"

"It's your uncle." Daniel opened the door and stood gazing in at her. "I guess he's an Indian too, but he doesn't look like one. Doesn't anybody in your family ever wear feathers?"

Ignoring the question, Martha shoved her chair back from the desk, letting the book fall shut in front of her.

"Leekal" she exclaimed. "Leeka is here in Albuquerque!"

Her uncle was seated in the living room, talking to Mr. Boynton, when she reached the foot of the stairway. At her first sight of him through the entrance from the hall, Martha caught her breath in an instant of amazement. Surely Daniel had been mistaken! The well-dressed young man in the tweed sports jacket and neatly pressed trousers, sitting with his back to her and chatting easily with Mr. Boynton, must surely be someone who had come to call on Laurie.

Then he turned, and she saw him in profile, the straight nose and the high cheekbones, the flash of white teeth against the bronze skin. It was Leeka, after all—a strange, cosmopolitan Leeka who, like herself, was of neither one world nor the other.

He caught sight of her in the doorway. Rising, he held out his hand in greeting, exclaiming, "Hello!"

Mr. Boynton rose as well. "Martha, I'm certainly glad to see you!" he declared. "Your uncle and I have been discussing state politics, and he has me over a barrel. If I don't get out of this conversation soon, he's going to have me changing a few of my favorite opinions."



He and Leeka exchanged an easy smile.

"If you'll excuse me," Mr. Boynton continued, "I'll have to adjourn to the den and get some paper work taken care of. It's been a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Weekoty."

"Thank you, sir. I enjoyed it also."

The two men shook hands, and, as Mr. Boynton left the room, Leeka turned again to Martha.

"Natachu," he said in their own language. "And how are things with you, Daughter-of-my-sister?"

The formality of the greeting, the use of her family name, the change in language, threw Martha into momentary confusion. Standing there with her hand outstretched, her lips half open to respond, she found herself torn as to how to answer.

"Leeka," she began, and then she saw the twinkle, the deep silent laughter which was part of him and of all their people. He had seen her discomfort and was amused by it, but would hold the joke secret until she saw it also. Their eyes met, and in that instant the strangeness between them vanished.

"Leeka," she exclaimed in English, "it is so good to see you!"

"I had a feeling it might be."

They sat down together on the sofa, and he tilted his head sideways, as though to observe her better. His face held a look of great solemnity.

"What, no lipstick? No nail polish? Really, young one, I had expected more of you. What have you been doing with yourself all these weeks, wasting your time on studies?"

"You are as big a tease as ever." Natachu smiled warmly

at her young uncle. "I have been studying, and it hasn't all been schoolwork. I am in the chorus, and I am learning to read music. There is a boy, Alan Wallace—"

"Oh, a boy already!" Leeka nodded sagely. "So your time has *not* been wasted. I will have to take a complete report back to Matcito."

"Oh, it's not that sort of a boy. He is teaching me music," Natachu assured him hastily. "He is not of our sort; he is a Bahana."

"Oh!" Leeka was no longer teasing. "It is best not to get involved then. Mixing blood is not good. Things are difficult enough for our generation without that." He paused. "You have not asked what I am doing here in the city."

Natachu was surprised. "I thought you were here to see me."

"Well, partly, of course. But there is another reason. I am looking for a job."

"A job!" Natachu exclaimed. "What are you talking about? You can't be planning to leave the pueblo?"

"And why not? Do you think you are the only one who wants to *do* things? I was away, you know, for four years, while I was in the service. I know more about airplane engines than the airplanes do themselves. Do you think I want to sit there, hammering bits of silver and stringing beads together, when I could be putting airplanes into the sky?" He shook his head. "I want to build my sons a future that will reach beyond jewelry making and corn sowing."

"Your sons!" Natachu broke in excitedly. "Are you going to be married? Is it Maria? Oh, Leeka, how wonderful!"

"I hadn't meant to tell you." Now it was his turn to look embarrassed. "We want to complete our plans before tell-



ing the families. I do not want to live with her parents and sisters and their husbands and all the rest of them. I want to take my bride to my own house. If necessary, I'll repair motor scooters instead of airplanes, and we'll live in a one-room apartment. The thing is, it is going to be *ours*."

"But, what about Maria?" asked Natachu. "Will she be happy away from her people?"

Leeka's face softened. "Maria will be happy wherever I am."

"There will be no one for her to talk with during the day," Natachu reminded him. "There will be no one to share the chores. When the babies come, there will be no one to help her. If something happened to one of them, whom would she call on?"

"A doctor," Leeka answered firmly. "A regular M.D. type doctor, and we won't have to drive fifty miles to find him, either. Remember when Benjamin broke his arm and I had to haul him all the way to the hospital in Gallup? Mother wouldn't speak to me for weeks afterward. She wanted the medicine man to take care of him."

Natachu nodded in agreement.

"There ought to be a doctor at the pueblo. It is only the older people who believe that the medicine man can cure everything. If there were a medicine man with medical training—"

"I'll send one of my boys through medical school," declared Leeka. "He can go back and take care of things."

There was levity in his voice, but something else as well. Natachu heard and recognized it.

"Ah, yes," she said softly. "You will build airplanes, and your sons will be doctors, and I—your niece—will tour the

world as a famous opera singer. We are a marvelous family, are we not, we Weekotys?"

They smiled at each other, the shy, conspiring smiles of dreamers who know that to each other they are not ridiculous.

Leeka got to his feet.

"I'll go along now and let you study. Your mother will be glad to hear of you. She worries that you may not be well and happy."

"I've written," Natachu said defensively. "A letter every week since I got here."

"I know. I've read them to her. Still, it's not the same as having seen you."

"How are they?" asked Natachu. "My parents and the children? And Grandmother?"

"Your parents are fine. The children also. I've bought your mother a present—a washing machine."

"A washer!" Natachu regarded him with amazement. "An *electric* washer, like the one here at the Boyntons?"

"I haven't seen the one here, but I suppose they are all about the same. You plug it in and it washes the clothes." He looked extremely pleased with himself. "It's that old one of the Nelsons'. They're buying a combination thing with a built-in dryer. I've been paying it off by helping them build the new wing on the mission."

"I bet Mother's thrilled!" exclaimed Natachu. "Think how much work it will save her!"

"She's pretty excited about it. It's your grandmother who isn't happy. She thinks it's unnatural. It's working against the gods."



"That sounds like Grandmother," Natachu said in amusement. "How is she, Leeka? You didn't tell me."

He hesitated before answering. "She is growing older, you know. Her thoughts do not come quite so clearly."

"What do you mean?" Natachu asked in surprise. "Is she ill? Her thoughts were coming clearly enough when I left in September."

"When people are old," Leeka said slowly, "a few months can make a difference. Your going away was not easy for the Old One. It was a change. She does not like changes. She is afraid of them."

"Do you think—" Guilt was beginning to creep over Natachu. "Do you think I should not have come? Was it wrong for me to do so? I did not mean for it to hurt anyone."

"It was right," Leeka told her firmly. "It was the only thing you could have done. When I leave, it will be even worse for her, because I am her son. Yet, I too will have to go if I am to be true to myself and to Maria." He paused, his eyes taking on a teasing twinkle. "But look, little two-heart, why is it that you do not ask about Matcito? Has this Bahana boy wiped him so completely from your memory?"

"Of course not." Natachu felt her cheeks growing suddenly warmer. "I was just about to ask about him. You know, it is proper that I ask of my parents first. How—how is Matcito?"

"The same as ever. He hunts and fishes. He leaps and dances. He has his own horse now." The twinkle increased. "His hair is thick; his eyes are like those of an

eagle! He is strong as a wolf; he is agile as a young deer! The maidens swarm about him—"

"Oh, stop it!" Natachu snapped, suddenly irritable. "You are not going to make me jealous."

"I only warn you; he is a lad of great beauty. Even your friend Duvangyamsi seems to think so." He leaned over suddenly and picked up a brown paper parcel which had been lying in front of him on the coffee table. "By the way, I've brought you something. It's a Care Package from the pueblo."

"A Care Package?" Natachu smiled in spite of herself.

"Your mother sent it. She wants to be sure you are eating properly."

When she opened the parcel after Leeka's departure, Natachu found it contained two loaves of her mother's own piki bread.

Her room seemed small that night when she returned to it—too small and too bright, with walls too enclosing. She looked at the books spread over the desk and knew that it was useless to open them. Instead, she switched off the study lamp and crossed to the window.

On the lawn below, the moonlight fell like a golden river. Above, the sky was high and very clear. This is a night, thought Natachu, when I would go up to the rooftop and sleep beneath the stars.

She thought about how it would be with the coarse wool blanket wrapped tightly around her and the breeze from the desert cold against her face. Far and deep, the sky would stretch, flecked with a million tiny pinpoints of light. In the rooms beneath her, the family would be sleeping—her father and mother, Benjamin and the babies,



her aunt and uncle and their children, Leeka and Grandmother. All safely together beneath one roof—the family.

Like a tree, thought Natachu, a strong, sprawling tree with branches and twigs and new buds blooming and roots sunk deep in the earth. The trunk holds the branches, and the branches the twigs, and the sap runs through them, and the seasons do not change them. They are one, and their strength is in their oneness.

She closed her eyes and leaned her face against the edge of the window. An automobile passed noisily on the street below.

In the house about her slept another group of people; her mind drifted to them with a strange kind of tenderness. The handsome, gray-haired man with a bulging brief case of work, brought home from the office to fill the evenings—the beautiful, dissatisfied woman, fighting the changes the years forced upon her, trying to compete in her own way with the social activities of her lovely young daughter. They were rushing too fast in too many directions. A family, yet not a family, they lived here together, a product of their environment, as she was of hers. Was it really their world for which she was reaching?

I am afraid! Quite suddenly, she knew it. The aching, splitting feeling within her was *fear!*

What am I doing here? she asked herself wildly. Where am I going? Where do I *want* to go?

She turned from the window and crossed to the dresser upon which she had laid the parcel. Fumbling in the darkness, she drew from the open end of it a loaf of the piki bread and, lifting it to her mouth, she bit into it.

She pictured her mother on her knees at the pueblo,

grinding the corn to meal. She thought of the rough dough being kneaded, being prayed over that it might contain no evil, that it might nourish in spirit as well as in body those who consumed it.

Forcing her teeth into the dry crust, she thought, I have eaten this all of my life. I have eaten it and thought that I liked it, for I knew of nothing better.

Replacing the loaf on the dresser, she crossed to the bed and stretched herself upon it. Outside, the moonlight shifted against the curtains.

The girl on the bed lay very quiet, listening to the night silence. Martha—Natachu. Divided in the darkness, she was not certain of her name.



## 6



THE THING that impressed Martha most about Alan Wallace was his intense interest in everything and everybody in the world about him. He knew just what he wanted and where he was going. His father, who had been a doctor, had left him a trust fund sufficient, if supplemented by a scholarship, to put him through college and medical school. Alan was determined to win the scholarship, and his straight A grades showed that he would undoubtedly do so. He was accepted, despite his slight build, by Chuck Armstrong and the other school Big Wheels, and had been elected vice president of the Key Club. He sang a sweet, true, slightly nasal tenor in the school chorus. And he took an unfeigned pleasure in giving Martha music lessons.

"Don't you ever get tired of this?" she asked him once, as she started for what seemed the hundredth time on the melody he was teaching her.

Deliberately, he reached over and held her finger an instant longer on the key she was pressing.

"You hold this one for three beats, not two. Don't you see there's a dot after it? Keep your eyes on the music, not the keyboard." Then he grinned the easy, lopsided grin that was Alan. "No, of course I'm not tired of it. I like to see you learn. It's sort of exciting."

Their lessons had fallen into a regular pattern of an hour twice weekly in the school music room before the beginning of the day's classes. Mr. Shelby had arranged for them to have access to the room and to the upright piano, and on these mornings Martha rose early, bolted her breakfast, and hurried through the still uncrowded streets to meet Alan at the school.

To Martha, the music lesson time seemed to fly by with incredible swiftness, and it hardly seemed possible when the bell rang and the rise of voices from the halls below indicated that school was beginning for the day.

Now she raised her head and saw the long hand of the clock on the wall poised firmly on the final minute mark. As she watched it, it clicked over, and the sound of the first bell flooded the building.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "it seems as though we've hardly got started!"

Alan nodded sympathetically. "How about meeting here after school? We haven't had a chance to try the new piece for the Christmas program yet. I'll bet anything Mr. Shelby gives you the solo on that one."

"The solo!" Martha drew in her breath sharply. "Do you really think so? Has he said anything to you about it?"

"No, but who else could he give it to? The only other person who could handle it is Barbara Baily, and she already has the finale."



"He might give her this one also," Martha said. "She sings better than I do."

"I don't know about that." Alan considered the question honestly. "I really think you've got the better voice. The thing is, she has worked with hers—private singing lessons and that sort of thing. She controls it better."

"I came close to sharing a locker with her," Martha remarked wryly. She considered telling Alan about the incident in the book room, but thought better of it. "I envy her the voice lessons."

"Well, she probably envies you the natural talent you have," Alan said matter-of-factly. "Let's meet here at three-thirty, and we'll give the new piece a once-over."

"I can't. I have to get Teddy at his nursery school," Martha turned from the piano resignedly. "The Boyntons have agreed to let him stay there late on Tuesdays and Thursdays so I can go to chorus practice. I can't ask them for anything more."

"Couldn't Laurie pick him up for you this once? Cheerleader practice is over for the season. She must have her afternoons free for a change."

"I can't ask Laurie," Martha told him.

Alan regarded her quizzically. "I guess you don't want me to ask you why not."

"I'd rather you didn't."

They parted at the door without further comment, each going in a different direction. Martha turned down the hall toward her homeroom. It's easy, she thought, being with someone like Alan.

He was interested, but never curious. His questions, when he asked them, were broad and impersonal. Some-

times she found herself telling him things about her home and family, about their life and traditions, that it would never have occurred to her to mention to anyone else, even Mr. Boynton.

Alan accepted these accounts with the same open-minded interest he showed in everything else.

"You mean each pueblo has its own language? And they aren't reservations at all, but special government land grants? What about the schools there—are they taught in English?"

"That's a problem. They are. And most of the younger children can't understand it. And the schoolbooks seem so strange to them—*Dick and Jane* and *Alice and Jerry*—riding their bicycles and coaster wagons, living in houses that Indian children can hardly imagine, and doing things they would never think of doing." She shook her head. "It's no wonder they learn so slowly, and so many of them quit school as soon as they are able to."

"What do you think could be done about it?" Alan asked with interest.

"I don't know, really. It would take a lot of thinking. First of all, the teachers should speak both languages. They should know about both civilizations—the world where *Dick and Jane* live and the world of the pueblo. They should find some way to blend them when they are teaching."

"It's strange that I have lived all my life so close to the pueblos and know so little about them." Alan seemed abashed. "It's not really funny at all—it's kind of awful."

"You're not alone; Miss Raye is always asking me to tell her more about them." Martha smiled. "Dan and Teddy



can't seem to get over the fact that I don't go around in feathers."

"You ought to stick a few in your hair some morning," Alan suggested, "just to give them a thrill."

"I should," agreed Martha. "I'm afraid I've been a big disappointment to them."

It was a silly suggestion, but it stayed with her. She discarded the idea of feathers. One evening, however, before tucking the boys in for the night, she went to the back of her closet and took out the fiesta dress. Smiling at her own absurdity, she put it on and went in to them.

For an instant after she entered the room, there was complete silence. Then Teddy let out a crow of triumph.

"Danny! Look at her! Martha is an Indian!"

Laughing, Martha reached over and caught him by the shoulders, giving him a playful shove back onto his bed.

"People are what they are, you little silly! It isn't what they wear on the outside that makes them something!"

But Teddy was not to be put aside.

"I *like* you for an Indian!" he shrieked delightedly.

Daniel was staring as though in a trance at the richness of the colors. His eyes, behind the glasses, were huge with awe.

"You're beautiful!" he whispered.

With a rush of gratitude, Martha turned to him, and then checked herself quickly. She had learned from experience that you did not reach your arms out to Daniel. His need for affection was a private thing, shut tightly within him; what he did not receive from his mother, he wanted from no one else.

"Oh, Dan," Martha said impulsively, "I wish I could

take you home with me!" Immediately, she regretted her words.

"Why?" Daniel asked warily.

She could not tell him the real reason.

"Because," she offered lamely, "you and my brother would have such good times together."

Because, her heart shouted, you are a good little boy, and you deserve more than you are receiving!

Never could she remember an Indian child who did not receive attention. If the mother was busy with her weaving or baking or the care of a younger baby, there were aunts and grandmothers and sisters and cousins, one of whom could always find a few moments to spare for a small boy. Even the fathers and uncles were not beyond sharing their time and interests with the children. It was not uncommon to see a group of men chatting together in the village plaza, each with a baby strapped contentedly to his shoulders.

Here, however, there were only the two parents, and both were continually busy. Mr. Boynton, for all his innate kindness, was not a man to coddle children. Mrs. Boynton's life seemed to be a continual succession of welfare projects and club activities. To Martha, she appeared always to be running, to be reaching frantically for the bright artificialities, while the good years, the warm, satisfying realities, slipped by unrealized.

It did not seem to matter too much with Teddy; his appealing smile and cute baby ways won him attention whenever he wanted it. But Daniel—

"Get into your bed," Martha told him now, "and I'll sing you the story that goes with this dress."



"A story goes with it?" Teddy scrambled hurriedly under the covers. "Is the dress special? Don't you wear it all the time?"

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed Martha. "It's a fiesta dress. I wear it for celebrations, the way Laurie does her party dresses."

"It's prettier than any of Laurie's," Daniel observed solemnly. "What do you celebrate in it?"

"We have all kinds of celebrations," Martha told him. "In springtime, we dance for the planting, that the seeds will take hold in the earth and begin to grow. In the summer, we dance for the rain. In autumn, we dance for Thanksgiving, for the results of a good harvest. In winter, there are the prayer dances that the snow will be heavy in the mountains."

"Why do you want heavy snow?" asked Dan.

"So it will melt in the springtime and fill the streams and bring water down to the fields. If it is dry, the corn will not grow. Corn is the most important thing in the world to our people. Without it, they would starve."

"Sing the story," demanded Teddy, sounding for all the world like Benjamin.

"All right." Without further prelude, Martha seated herself on the foot of his bed and began to sing.

The melody was an old one, long familiar. It was a favorite of her sisters. She had sung it so often that the rise of her voice was the flicker of firelight on plastered walls, the sway of a cradle from an adobe ceiling.

Losing herself in the story, she sang of the pure Seven Maidens whose nightly dancing caused the corn to grow, but whose beauty was such that the men of the pueblo

could not be restrained from trying to possess them. She told of the Maidens' flight from the village, of the corn shriveling and dying in the fields, of the harvest failing and the people going hungry. She sang of Paiyatuma, god of Dew and of Dawn, and of his journey to the Land of Always-Summer to find the Maidens and restore them to their people.

When she had finished, the room was very quiet. Finally, Daniel spoke. "What does it mean?" he asked.

Startled, Martha turned to stare at him.

"You mean, you didn't understand?—" And then the stupidity of the question swept over her. Of course, he had not understood her. How could he have? She had sung the story in the language of her own Indian people!

"I'm sorry, Danny. How silly of me! I wasn't even thinking. I'm so used to telling the story to my sisters—"

"Sing it again," suggested Daniel, "in English."

"In English? I don't know if I can."

"Why not?" asked Teddy with interest.

"I've never heard it in English. The words would be hard to change over. It wouldn't fit the music."

"Try, anyway," urged Daniel. He was sitting up straight in his bed, his arms clasped around his knees. The nervous twitch which so often dominated his face had disappeared entirely, and he looked relaxed and eager.

Unable to refuse him, Martha nodded. "All right, I'll try it. I warn you, though, I may not be able to finish. I'll have to go very slowly."

She drew a long breath and took up the song at its beginning:



"This is the tale of the Seven Maidens,  
Of the Seven Corn Mothers, white and beautiful—  
Who danced all night by the rainbow fires,  
Who danced the corn from its winter sleeping."

Carefully, she sought for words that would fit themselves to the melody. It was not as difficult as she had anticipated. Slowly, the story wove its magic. The room seemed soft with firelight and dancing as Martha sang on:

"They fled through the hills and the silent mountains;  
On bare white feet, ran the Seven Maidens.  
They fled from the men who would pursue them.  
They fled to the land of Always-Summer—  
The Seven Corn Mothers, white and beautiful."

Outside, the night seemed to press at the windows. The loss of the Maidens filled the room with emptiness. Martha's voice became low and mournful, echoing the grief of the sorrowing village:

"In the valley fields, the green things perished.  
The seeds in the earth would not reach upward.  
The people grew thin and racked with hunger,  
And children wept in the streets of the village—  
Come back—oh, come back to us, our Maidens—  
Our Seven Corn Mothers, white and beautiful!"

"And did they?" Daniel asked breathlessly. His voice seemed almost part of the story. "Did they ever find them and bring them back again?"

"They tried to," answered Martha. "They sent the Eagle to find them, but he couldn't. He flew too high to see small things on the earth's surface. Then they sent the Falcon and Heavy Nose, the Raven, and they too were unsuccessful. They *were* found, finally—"

"Sing it!" interrupted Teddy.

"Not tonight. It's late. Besides, that part is difficult to put into English. I'll have to think about it for a little."

"Tomorrow?" asked Daniel. "Will you sing it tomorrow?"

Martha nodded. "Perhaps I can write down the words before then. It would make it much easier."

Daniel settled back contentedly. "You sure sing a good story."

"You're almost as good as television," asserted Teddy. When she left the room a few moments later, Martha was still smiling over the lavishness of the compliment.

The smile faded when she stepped into the hall and walked into Laurie. The girl was wearing pumps with high heels and carrying her trench coat. She had evidently just come from her room and was dressed to go out.

The look she gave Martha was quick and startled. Then, as suddenly, it vanished, to be replaced by an expression of overwhelming friendliness.

"What a charming dress! Where did it come from? I don't believe I've ever seen you wearing it."

"It's for fiestas," explained Martha. She glanced down at the gaudy skirt, feeling as ridiculous as a child in a masquerade costume. "I just put it on to show to the boys."

"It's very becoming—and so striking!" Laurie hesitated. "I guess you're going to your room to study."

"Yes, I have homework." And so do you, thought Martha. Math and English Literature, and we're supposed to read twenty pages for American Government.

"I'm going out for a minute," said Laurie, "to mail a letter."



Martha regarded her without comment. The silence between them deepened.

"All right, so I'm *not* going to mail a letter!" Laurie tossed her head defiantly. "I'm going for a ride with Chuck. Since that last report card, Daddy has forbidden me to go out on week nights. If he finds out about this, I'll be campused for weeks. Are you going to tell him?"

"It isn't any of my business," replied Martha.

"Of course it isn't, but you could tell him anyway. In your book, I probably deserve it. You wouldn't understand—or would you?" She paused, uncertainly. "Martha, have you ever been in love?"

"I think so," said Martha.

"Who is he? Somebody back at the pueblo?"

"There is a boy there, yes." She added no details.

"Do you miss him terribly? Would you do anything in the world to be with him?"

Martha's eyes moved past Laurie. "I have already said I would not tell your father."

Laurie flushed. "I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to pry into your personal affairs. I just wanted you to know how it was with me—about Chuck. I've gone with a lot of boys, but there's never been one before whom I felt this way about. If I don't see him, he'll date somebody else; I'm not as important to him as he is to me. Always before, with other boys, it's been the other way around. I thought, if you *could* understand—" Her voice held a note of pleading.

For an instant, Martha was moved. The girl sounded confused and lonely, as though she needed to talk to someone. Was it possible that she, the inimitable Laurie, was

looking for a friend and confidante? And then, as suddenly, she remembered other occasions—the lovely, wide-eyed face—the warm, guileless manner—the charm that could be turned on so easily to achieve its purpose. The angry, venomous voice tore through the picture: “I will never be a sister to an *Indian*!”

“It isn’t any of my business,” Martha said firmly and, with a shrug of indifference, she walked past the other girl and through the door of her own room. Without a backward glance, she drew it closed behind her.

Switching on the overhead light, she crossed to the desk and adjusted the study lamp. A formidable stack of books confronted her. Some of them contained assignments; others she had drawn herself from the school library. Two had come from the public library in town.

“We never stop learning,” Miss Raye had told her. “Always remember that, Martha. Take advantage of every opportunity.” With each passing day, the immensity of the things she did not know seemed greater.

Well, assignments first. The “government” book was at the top of the pile. Seating herself at the desk, Martha drew it toward her. Page eighty-seven—“The Rights of the Individual States.”

Laurie, she thought, should be reading this. What is she going to do when a test comes?

With the force of her charm, Laurie seemed able to maneuver herself out of almost any situation. A written examination, however, was something different.

“I suppose she’ll manage somehow. She always seems to.” Martha thumbed through the book in search of the



assigned chapter. When she found it, she stared at it unseeingly. The conversation in the hall kept coming back to her.

"Martha," Laurie had asked, "have you ever been in love?"

"I think so," she had answered. Why had she phrased it in that way? Why had she not simply answered, "Yes," because there was Matcito—there had always been Matcito, since the earliest time of their childhood? He was dark and handsome and broad of shoulder. He was a fisherman and a hunter; he performed with strength and skill the crouching, wheeling motions of the Bird Dance; he was fleetest in the village at the races in the springtime.

Of course I love him, thought Martha decidedly. On some far day, he will be my husband.

But Laurie had asked another question. "Do you miss him terribly? Would you do anything in the world to be with him?"

This, she had not answered.

I've been busy, Martha thought defensively. I've been involved in studies and music and taking care of the children. If I haven't thought of him as often as I might have, it hasn't been because I haven't missed him.

She closed her eyes and brought his face before her, the raven hair, the straight-lipped mouth, the heavy-lidded beauty of the almond-shaped eyes. It formed on the screen of her memory as she had last seen it, gazing at her wistfully when she turned to climb into Mr. Boynton's car.

"He is a lad of great beauty," she told herself firmly, unconsciously echoing the words that Leeka had used to describe him. And then she frowned in amazement. The

face in her mind was changing, becoming distorted. Was it possible—did Matcito really have *freckles*?

The eyes were no longer dark—they were hazel. The thick black hair was a cinnamon bristle. The sullen mouth was widening, tilting upward, into Alan's familiar lopsided grin.

"Oh, no!" Martha whispered. "Oh, no!" Her eyes flew open. For a moment she was too stunned to think clearly. Then she began to shake her head furiously, as though to rid it of the alien picture. "It can't be Alan," she said softly. "I *can't* be feeling this way about Alan. Oh, dear—I'm afraid it's past time that I went home!"





7 SCHOOL LET OUT for Christmas vacation on December twenty-second, and on the twenty-third, Mr. Boynton took Natachu back to the pueblo.

They did not talk much during the long drive. Natachu, lost in her own thoughts, hardly noticed the silence. She watched the black road unwinding like a ribbon ahead of them and the houses becoming fewer and farther apart. At last, they turned off the highway onto a narrow unpaved road which wound its way upward toward the far mountains. Dust rose before them in a golden haze, and on either side red cliffs jutted out to cut the glare of the afternoon sun.

"It isn't far from here," said Natachu.

She had seen the village long before her companion and now, leaning forward, she watched the thin spirals of smoke that rose in almost undefinable tracery against the sky. The sprawling adobe houses were set in an uneven line along the edge of the mesa, and once in a while the sun would catch the glint of a pane of window glass.

The roadside scenery began to be dotted by familiar landmarks—the huge black rock, the cattle guard, the Trading Post, with its gas pump and general store. They passed the Catholic Mission, the Baptist Mission, the row of small green duplex apartments which housed the teachers; and then they were in the village itself, winding slowly between the houses.

"You can let me out anywhere along here," said Natachu.

Mr. Boynton regarded her with surprise. "Don't you want me to drive you to your house?"

"The road is so rough," Natachu told him, "that it's better not to take a good car on it."

They drew to a stop at the edge of the plaza, the public square where the people of the village gathered to gossip and barter. As though on cue, a throng of children began to assemble. Mr. Boynton, leaving the driver's seat to open the door for Natachu, found himself surrounded by them. Small, brown hands stroked his trouser leg and tugged shyly at his coat pocket. Little girls giggled and held out corn-cob dolls for his inspection; small boys ran their hands with awe and respect over the smooth finish and chrome bumper of the shiny new car.

Mr. Boynton glanced about him uncomfortably. "What do they want?" he asked Natachu.

"Just to look at you and at the car. Cars like this one don't come through the village often. Most of these children have never seen anything but jeeps and pickup trucks." She turned to the children, addressing them firmly in their own language. "Run! Shoo! Away with you! Go home to your mothers and learn some manners!"



They fell back, giggling, and one boy called out mischievously, "We know you! This isn't *your* car! You're just Benjamin Weekoty's sister, back from Bahana school."

Laughing with him, Natachu answered, "You're right; it's not my car, but you had better run anyway. This is a big, hungry automobile, and it eats bothersome children for breakfast!"

At this, the whole crowd burst into peals of laughter, and Natachu turned again to Mr. Boynton. Suddenly, to her surprise, she found herself shy with him.

"Good-by," she said, "and thank you. Thank you for everything. I hope that you and your family will have a wonderful holiday."

"Thank you, Martha; we wish you the same." He reached into his pocket. "Mrs. Boynton and I have a little something for you. You must promise not to open it until day after tomorrow."

"Oh, you should not have!" Natachu drew back in distress before the small white envelope he held out to her. "You have done so much for me already. It is not right that you should give me a present also."

"But it isn't just a Christmas gift," Mr. Boynton told her. "It's a thank-you for the pleasure you gave to us the other evening."

"What pleasure?" Natachu asked in bewilderment, trying to recall some action that would warrant remuneration.

"Hearing your solo at the Christmas program in the school auditorium. It was a lovely way to begin the Christmas season."

"But that was nothing!" Natachu felt her cheeks growing warm with pleasure. "That was just singing."

She had expected to feel nervous as she stood before an audience. She had been very nervous thinking about it beforehand. When the moment came, however, and she stepped out alone in the hushed auditorium, with the soft lights of the Christmas trees glowing in the background, suddenly, it was as it had been on that previous occasion when she had sung at the tryouts. Her voice had reached out without her, a thing apart, rising and thrilling with the notes of the music. She had not been afraid at all.

There had been a great deal of applause. Even Barbara Baily, when she sang later, carrying the solo in the closing song of the evening, had not received more.

Now Mr. Boynton smiled at Natachu. "Which house is yours, Martha? I'll carry the bag for you."

"It is a light one; I can carry it easily." Natachu gestured toward the children who had scattered, only to re-assemble on the far side of the automobile. "If we leave the car unguarded, it will be climbed on."

"You're probably right." Mr. Boynton glanced uneasily at the sea of eager faces. "When would you like to have me come back for you? Classes start January second. How about my picking you up at noon on the first?"

"I—" Natachu hesitated. The moment that she had been dreading had finally arrived. She would have to tell him the thing she had decided. She drew in a long breath and faced it. "I think it would be better if I did not return to Albuquerque."

"Did not return!" Mr. Boynton stared at her. "For heaven's sake, why not? Is something the matter? Haven't you



been happy with us? Have Dan and Teddy been too much for you?" He frowned suddenly. "It's Laurie. She has done something to hurt your feelings. And she gave me her promise—"

"Oh, no," Natachu interrupted quickly. "It is not any of those things. It is only—" She struggled to find an explanation. "One cannot be of two worlds. My grandmother told me this, and I did not believe her. Since I have come away, I find that it is true. I am dreaming of things which should not be in my thoughts. I am forgetting things which are my birthright. It is not good, being a 'two-heart.'"

"You can't be serious." Mr. Boynton shook his head in disbelief. "You're giving up your education, a chance to make something of yourself, to go on to college, to have a career—and for what? For this?" His gesture took in the wind-swept street, the adobe buildings. "You've made such progress, Martha. Your report card was far better than Laurie's. You've learned so much so quickly; how can you even think of wasting it? There must be more to your decision than you have told me."

There is more, thought Natachu. There is Alan, the way I feel about Alan. There is the fact that, already, I am forgetting my own people.

"One cannot be two things at once," she said quietly. "One must choose. I have chosen."

"Well, I'm not going to accept your decision so readily. Not until you've thought it over more fully." He lifted her canvas bag out of the car and set it on the ground between them. "I'll be here at noon on January first."

"It will be a wasted trip," Natachu predicted. "I will not

be going back with you. Please, do not make such a long drive for nothing."

"I hope it will not be for nothing," said Mr. Boynton firmly.

They shook hands solemnly. To Natachu, it seemed the seal of finality. She gripped the large hand a little more tightly than she would have normally, aware of the kindness that lay beyond the gruff exterior of the man before her. Then she picked up her bag and, without looking backward, she walked quickly away across the plaza to the home of her own family.

The house was smaller than she remembered it, and the yard more barren. A few scrawny chickens pecked in a disheartened way at the dry stubble by the woodpile. The wind was chill and dust-laden, and Natachu shivered and pulled her coat more tightly about her as she crossed the yard to the house.

When she opened the door, the breath of home rushed out to meet her. It was a combination of the familiar warmth and smells and family noises. The only thing different about the room was the addition of the large white washing machine which stood in the far corner.

For one moment she stood in the doorway, looking in at it. In the same way, as a stranger, she had paused in the hallway of the Boynton house, gazing in at the white and gold living room. Then, with shrieks of excitement, the children discovered her. An instant later, she was surrounded with laughter and confusion.

"You *did* come back!" Benjamin's face was radiant. Natachu hugged him to her, noticing as she did so how



sharp his ribs were, even through the padding of the flannel shirt.

The little girls tumbled about her like delighted puppies. Her mother, her lap occupied by the baby, smiled in greeting.

"Daughter! How good it is to see you! Come, let me look upon you!" She turned to the grandmother, who was seated, dozing, in her usual place by the iron cookstove in the center of the room. "Mother, wake up! Natachu has come home to us!"

Natachu's eyes shifted quickly between the two women. Her mother's figure had thickened. Her face looked tired, but it was lighted by a look of placid serenity.

The changes in the older woman were not so easily defined. She straightened in her chair, stretching her hand out before her. "Natachu?"

"Here, Grandmother. Right here beside you. It is good to be with you again."

The girl moved closer and stood quiet, permitting the gnarled fingers to run a tour of inspection across the contours of her face. The hand moved downward, touching, testing. It paused as it reached the collar of the red wool coat.

"What is this that you are wearing?"

"A winter coat," Natachu told her. "It used to belong to Laurie Boynton. Her mother said I could have it to come home in."

"So," her grandmother said accusingly, "you have come back to us in Bahana clothing. I suppose you have more of it also, which you have not seen fit to show."

"Why, yes, there are some dresses in my suitcase. Laurie

outgrew them last winter." Natachu glanced about her at her younger sisters and brother in their blue jeans and tennis shoes. "My clothing is no more Bahana than everything else we wear."

"Do not be insolent!" The old woman's voice rose sharply. "Go and put on your *rebozo*! I am ashamed of a grandchild who will not wear the clothing of her people!"

"My *rebozo*! Why, it has been years since anybody—" Natachu began in bewilderment. She stopped short at her mother's warning gesture. The younger children had all fallen quiet.

"Go, Daughter," her mother said, "and do as your grandmother tells you. I will come and help you find your things."

She got up heavily and handed the baby to one of its sisters. Then, with a motion to Natachu to follow, she led the way from the room.

"But why?" Natachu asked her as soon as they were out of hearing. "What is she talking about? All the young people wear modern clothing, even here at the pueblo. You and Father do yourselves, except on ceremonial days."

"I know," her mother said softly. "She has forgotten. In her mind, the years flow together. She does not have her sight to keep reminding her of the changes which have come." She reached out and laid a tentative finger against the sleeve of the red coat. "How warm it is! And what a pretty color!"

"It is yours," Natachu said impulsively. She slipped off the coat and lifted it to her mother's shoulders. "We are almost the same size. It should fit you perfectly."

"For me? But you need it!" Her mother's smile was in-



credulous. "You will need to look nice when you return to school in Albuquerque."

"I am not going back," said Natachu. "I have found that one cannot be two things at once. I am an Indian."

There was a moment's silence while her mother digested this statement. With a characteristic respect for her daughter's privacy, she did not ask questions. She merely nodded.

"You will need the coat here then. It is only the beginning of the winter."

"You will need it more," said Natachu. "There is going to be a new baby?"

"In the early summer, near the time of the KoKochi Dance. I think it will be a boy this time." Her mother sounded hopeful. She had given birth to two boy babies who had not lived. If they had, they would have filled the gap in age between Natachu and Benjamin.

"It seems so soon," said Natachu uncertainly. The last baby had been born the previous winter. She could recall as though it were yesterday the cold of the wind that sliced against her as she ran to the kiva to summon the witch doctor. "You have hardly had time to get your strength back again."

"It is the will of the gods." Her mother gave a shrug of acceptance and changed the subject. "Your grandmother will be glad of your return to us. She will be glad that you are going to stay. It has been hard for her, losing Leeka."

"Leeka!" exclaimed Natachu. "Has he left already? Has he really found a job building airplanes?"

"He was not that lucky. He works in a garage in Gallup. He is happy, though, and in the spring he will come back

for Maria." Her mother paused. "It is hard for the Old One. He is the favorite son. She keeps forgetting. Each time she asks for him, she must be told all over, as though for the first time."

"She will have to learn to accept it," said Natachu.

She was startled by the coldness of her own voice. She thought of the old woman by the fire, of the groping hands and wrinkled face. She thought of the accusing voice, of temper tantrums, of the constant demands upon her patient, long-suffering mother.

She is my grandmother, she told herself quickly, trying to erase the resentment that surged through her. My *grandmother*. But the word had lost its magic. She could no longer bring herself to feel awe—or even warm affection.

When the family ate that night, the meal consisted of the hominy of which Natachu had dreamed so often when she had first arrived at the Boyntons', plus heavy slices of piki bread and chocolate cookies. The bread was dry and the hominy of a thick, pasty consistency. There was no meat, nor any green vegetable.

"The children should be drinking milk," Natachu commented.

The rest of the family regarded her with surprise.

"Is that what the Bahanas have been giving you?" her aunt asked with interest. "I do not think the little ones would like it."

"It is good for them. It makes them grow." Natachu glanced about her at the crowd of children, some still eating, some playing, two of them already asleep on a folded



blanket in a corner of the room. "You should see the Boynton boys. Teddy is as big as Benjamin, although he is years younger, and Dan is very tall."

"You think the milk makes this happen?" her mother asked. Her eyes shifted to the baby, who was small for her age and still not walking.

"Milk, and other things—orange juice and codliver oil and vitamins. The Boyntons always have meat for dinner at night, and a salad."

"And where," asked her father, "are these things to come from? You will buy us a cow, perhaps? And a vine on which to grow oranges?"

"They don't grow on vines," said Natachu helplessly. "They grow on trees."

"I like pop," asserted Benjamin. Draining his bottle, he picked up a piece of piki bread in one hand and a stack of cookies in the other. Then he went over to the corner occupied by his sleeping cousins and shook one of them. "Come on—it's early yet. Let's work on our model airplanes."

This is home, thought Natachu. She sat very still, looking about her. This is the way it has always been and will always be.

Grandmother was sleeping in her chair by the fire, her head fallen limply sideways and her mouth partly open. After clearing away the dishes, her mother and aunt were settling down to their bead work. Natachu's uncle had withdrawn to his workbench and was showing her father a new design he was creating for a belt buckle. The room was warm and close and filled with the smells of cooking and smoke and people.

Outside, the wind moaned softly around the corners of

the house. The sky was heavy with the promise of snow.

This will be my life, thought Natachu, as she watched her mother pushing her needle through tiny blue beads. Washing, baking, weaving, beaded rabbits' feet, a baby in the cradle—winter, spring, summer, fall—season after season, into eternity.

"One cannot be two things at once," she had said to Mr. Boynton. "One must choose. I have chosen."

After a little, Benjamin left his airplane and came over to her. His smile was like Teddy's.

"Sing us a story, Natachu," he demanded.





8

DESPITE THE HEAVY SKIES, snow did not fall for a number of days. It was not until the first of January that Natachu awoke to see a border of white along the outside window ledge.

Rising quietly so as not to waken her sisters, she crossed to the window. The yard outside was hidden beneath an unbroken layer of white. The snow lay like frosting over the woodpile, over the round outdoor oven where her mother did the baking, covering all traces of harshness and poverty with an ethereal brilliance. It seemed to Natachu as though the whole world lay soft and vulnerable, breathlessly awaiting the first footfall of the new year.

This is where I belong, she told herself firmly. She paused and then repeated the words aloud, trying to convince herself by the sound of them. "This is where I belong."

Only days had passed since her return to the pueblo, yet so quickly had she fallen back into the familiar pattern that it seemed sometimes as though she had never

been away. On Christmas Eve, after the service at the mission, she had attended a Kachina Dance and, sitting in the kiva with Benjamin close beside her on one side and her mother on the other, she had watched the men of the village leaping and whirling to the pulsing rhythm of the turtle shells and drums. The time in Albuquerque with the Boyntons was a dream, a slice out of another life in another place and time. It is a chapter from a story that I read someplace and have never quite forgotten, Natachu thought sometimes. The girl in that story could not possibly have been I.

And yet, despite its dreamlike quality, the memory of that time flavored her present existence. In its light, things which before she had taken for granted now assumed new proportions. She found herself becoming increasingly critical.

"The children do not eat properly," she remarked to Mr. Nelson, when she stopped by his home soon after her return to the pueblo to pay a brief visit to him and his family. "They do not bathe often enough. They do not take their schooling seriously; they go only because they have to, not because they want to learn things."

"These things will be corrected," Mr. Nelson told her. "Changes come slowly. Did I tell you that last Sunday we had twenty-three people at our evening service?"

"That's—wonderful," Natachu tried to put enthusiasm into her voice, but even to her own ears, it was unconvincing.

Mr. Nelson smiled at her understandingly. "Your people are moving ahead, Martha; never fear. The fact that they move slowly is not necessarily bad. Perhaps it is even



good, for it permits them to hold onto their own values, the beauties and traditions of an old and wonderful culture which are too precious to be lost. But they are moving; each generation reaches a bit further than the one before it. Look, for instance, at Martha Weekoty, who will soon be in college!"

His voice held such pride and approval that Natachu felt her face growing hot with guilt. She left soon after, unable to bring herself to tell him what she had come to say.

"Something is strange about you," Duvangyamsi told Natachu. "You are home again, but your heart is not as it should be. It is as though only part of you is here." It was the first time the two girls had seen each other since September. Duvangyamsi had frowned as she spoke, her eyes resting worriedly upon her friend's face. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," answered Natachu. Then she had added inconsistently, "I don't know."

"There is a boy, perhaps, back in Albuquerque? Someone you are missing?"

"No, of course not. I would never become so interested in someone who was a Bahana."

Natachu spoke firmly—and a little too quickly. With all her heart, she had been trying not to think of Alan Wallace. She had never imagined she would miss him so much.

From the time of Leeka's visit and the first realization of her feelings about him, she had determinedly pushed Alan to the back of her life. In school, she had avoided him, greeting him in a friendly way when she saw him, but never lingering long enough to become involved in con-

versation. She had terminated the early morning music lessons with the excuse that the approach of the Christmas season had created additional duties for her at the Boyntons'.

She knew he was puzzled by the change in their relationship. Sometimes at chorus practice she was conscious of his eyes resting upon her with a troubled expression.

One day, when they were leaving the school auditorium after a rehearsal for the Christmas program, he caught up with her at the doorway.

"Say, Martha, hold up a minute, will you?"

She had stopped then, because there was no way not to, and braced herself for the question that she was sure was coming. If he asked her what the matter was, she would have to tell him. He knew her too well to be fooled by pretense.

"I wondered," said Alan, "if you would like to go to a party with me on New Year's Eve. It's going to be at Chuck Armstrong's house. Laurie is going, and a lot of other kids we know."

"A party?" The question was so far from what she had expected that, for a moment, she could not answer. She could only stare at him. "You are asking me to go with you to a party?"

"It ought to be fun. Chuck's parties usually are." He met her gaze squarely. "I haven't seen much of you since we stopped the lessons. I—I've missed you."

I've missed you too, Alan! The words trembled on her lips; for one frantic instant she was afraid she had actually said them. Her eyes dropped from his face to the slender,



talented hands gripped tightly at his sides, and she realized how eagerly he was awaiting her answer.

"I won't be here for New Year's Eve," she told him. "I'm going home for the holidays."

"Oh!" He made no attempt to conceal his disappointment. "I hadn't thought of that."

"Thank you, anyway. It was nice of you to ask me."

She started to turn away from him and then, startled, felt his hand on her arm.

"Martha—"

She let herself be drawn back to face him. Now, she thought resignedly, now he will ask it.

"If you weren't leaving, would you have said yes? Would you have gone with me?"

The face, the hair, the eyes—they were exactly as she had envisioned them the night she had tried to picture Matcito. But there was more than that—the eager intelligence, the ambition, the interests they had shared between them. She braced herself for what she had to say.

"Alan, there is a boy back at the pueblo. He is an Indian, as I am. We have known each other since we were children. We have grown up in the same way, with the same background. We have many things in common."

He took it in slowly. "Is he the reason why you are going back for Christmas?"

"Not just for Christmas," Martha had answered. "When I go home, it will be to stay."

Now, standing at the window, she leaned forward, pressing her forehead against the cold glass. It will be all right, she told herself. I was happy with Matcito long before I met Alan. Being away from him for a while, I let

myself forget how handsome he is, the way I feel when he touches my hand. All I need is to see him again, and all silly thoughts of a Bahana boy will be gone.

Coming home to find Matcito gone was something she had never anticipated. He and many of the other men of the village were in Colorado, where they were helping to battle a forest fire. During the dry winter months, such fires were not uncommon, and the Forest Service depended upon young men from the pueblos to serve as volunteer fire-fighters. They were flown to wherever they were needed, and the payment they received for their services was a great boon to the village economy.

Matcito had gone before on these expeditions, but somehow Natachu had not expected him to be away on one at the exact time that she returned home.

Now, moving away from the window, she gathered her clothes and went in to dress by the iron cookstove.

Her mother, awake before her, had built the fire and was beginning the preparation of breakfast. The baby was still asleep in her cradle, swaying gently from the ceiling, and Grandmother, wide awake and fully dressed, sat in her accustomed place by the stove.

The latter turned her head as her granddaughter entered, trying to decipher the sound of the footsteps. "Is that Benjamin?"

"No, Grandmother, it is Natachu." The girl went over to the fire and began to dress, avoiding contact with the aged figure in the chair beside her. "Good morning, Grandmother. How are you today, Mother?"

"Well, thank you, my daughter," her mother responded.

Her grandmother leaned forward, as though to resume



an interrupted conversation. "It will be soon—the wedding?"

Natachu paused in her dressing. "What wedding, Grandmother?"

"Your wedding, of course." The old woman seemed surprised. "Your mother and I have been discussing it. It would have been better if we could have started the new room before the snow came."

"But, I have no plans to be married," Natachu said in astonishment. "At least, not at present."

Now it was her mother who looked surprised.

"We thought when you came home to us—when you said you were not going to return to the city—we thought, that, naturally—"

"That I would marry Matcito?" Natachu completed the sentence for her. "I suppose I will. It is the way we have always planned it. But, not yet. Not *now!*"

"But why not?" her mother asked her. "What reason is there for waiting? Matcito has been planning to marry you upon your return. He has been more than patient. He is a grown man, with a man's needs; it is time he had a wife. And, as for you—when I was your age, I had already borne my first baby."

"But I haven't graduated from school yet!" exclaimed Natachu. "Just because I am not staying in Albuquerque doesn't mean that I don't plan to graduate. I can go back to school here at the pueblo and get my diploma."

"Why?" her mother asked. "What need will you have for a diploma here at the pueblo? What use will you make of this—this education—once you have achieved it?"

"I—" Natachu faltered. "I—don't know."

The question had not been meant unkindly, but it left her as weak as though she had received a physical blow. What purpose, indeed, would a diploma serve her in the life that stretched ahead? Who needed an education in order to stitch souvenir dolls and bead rabbits' feet? Matcito had indeed been patient. What good reason was there not to marry him immediately? Her father and uncle would be pleased to have another man living in the house.

She drew a deep, shaky breath. "I am going outside. I have to think a bit."

Her mother did not ask questions. She merely nodded toward the red coat, where it hung on a peg by the door. "Dress warmly, Daughter. It is cold out."

Grandmother gave a stifled snort. "You need to think, you say? What is there to think about? What else is there in life for a woman except to be a wife and mother?"

Natachu made no effort to answer. She took the coat from the peg and put it on and went outside.

The cold air cut across her face and filled her lungs with a clean freshness. The wind had died during the night, and the sun was bright across the snow. Overhead, the thin line of a jet stream was etched against the heavens. The smoke from a hundred chimneys rose in dark spirals into the winter sky.

Natachu crossed the yard and followed the trail between the houses until she reached the edge of the mesa. She stood there for a long time in the cold and the sunlight, gazing down at the beauty of the snow-covered valley below.

This is a huge country, a huge world, Miss Raye had told her. A huge world, thought Natachu, and the thought



was like an ache inside her, a hungering and a longing for all those things which she would never see and never know.

She thrust her hands deep into the pockets of the red coat and felt one of them brush against paper. At first she could not imagine what it could be. Then she remembered the envelope that Mr. Boynton had thrust upon her when he left her at the plaza, and she drew it out and opened it.

Inside was a sheet of note paper. On it, in Mrs. Boynton's neat, slanted handwriting, was a message:

Dear Martha—

Instead of a material gift for Christmas, we would like to give you a semester of voice lessons at the Albuquerque Music School.

With our thanks for the very great pleasure you gave to us at the Christmas concert—

Affectionately,

Doris and Ted Boynton

For a moment Natachu was too dazed to take in the full meaning of the note. Holding the pages before her, she read it over and over, finding the words more incredible with each reading. The Boyntons were actually offering to give her voice lessons!

And I can't accept them! I won't be there to take them!

The pain of the realization was almost too great to bear. Clutching the paper, she forced herself to raise her eyes, to look instead out over the edge of the mesa. Her gaze was caught by a movement of something yellow far on the road below.

A pickup truck, she noted in surprise, watching it wind

its way carefully along the ice-encrusted road. And a second—and a third. Who—what? And then she knew.

It is the men, back from Colorado. They are being brought home from the airport. It is Matcito!

It was the thought of Matcito that brought the plan to her mind, the marvelous plan, the answer to everything. She stood there, shaken with the inevitability of it. She *could* go back to Albuquerque and take her voice lessons; of course she could! Why had she not thought of it sooner? She would not have to go back as a two-heart, desperately struggling to find a place between two worlds. She could go as an Indian woman, proudly secure in her heritage, hand in hand with her Indian husband.

Turning, Natachu began to run back along the way she had come. Her heart was pounding with a hope that was almost desperation.

"What is there for a woman," her grandmother had asked her, "except to be a wife and mother?"

There is more, Natachu cried silently, much more, and I will find it. Matcito and I will find it together!

She imagined them as they would live—in a small apartment at first, of course, but eventually in a house, perhaps even one as fine as the Boyntons'. In their home they would celebrate the Indian feast days, and their children would grow up knowing the movements of the Indian dances. She would take voice lessons, and give concerts and sing in operas. And, Matcito—she envisioned him in a business suit, coming home from an office. Almost at once, she reconstructed the picture. Matcito had not completed high school, so it was unlikely that he would qualify for a desk job. Still, he could return to school *now*—it was not



too late. The money he had earned from his fire-fighting would keep them for a little while, until they found part-time employment. They would both work hard and win scholarships to college; together, they would organize their studies. Or, perhaps, Matcito would want to learn a trade as Leeka had, something that he could do with his hands.

It would not be easy, but they could do it. And just working out a way to do it would, in itself, be exciting!

She reached the plaza before the trucks did and stood there, waiting, listening for the sound of their engines as they wound their way through the village. Word seemed somehow to have spread that the fire-fighters were returning. Women's faces appeared at windows all along the street, and children tumbled out of doorways, to stand eagerly waiting in the ankle-deep snow.

Soon the motors could be heard, rumbling dully in the distance, and then the sound of horns blowing. A shout went up from the children, a shout which turned into a cheer as the first truck rounded the corner and lumbered up to the plaza. The men in the back of the truck threw off their blankets and stood up and shouted back at the children.

On the sidelines, Natachu searched through the dusky faces for the one for which she had been waiting. He was not in the first truck. She transferred her attention to the second.

And then, suddenly, she saw him.

Even in filthy blue jeans and a smoke-stained lumber jacket, Matcito was a man of beauty. His shoulders were square and strong; his thick black hair fell forward in a

glossy bang across his forehead. His eyes, as Leeka had once commented, were like those of an eagle. From his place at the front of the truck, he saw Natachu and, with one lithe movement, he leaped to the ground and strode to meet her.

"So, you have decided to return to us!" he called in greeting. His voice was deeper than she remembered it, a man's voice instead of a boy's.

"I am back." Natachu held out her hands, and his closed over them. The old magic returned with his touch. "We have been apart too long!"

"Indeed, we have! You have missed so much—all the fall games and harvest dances." He grinned at her. "I have a new horse. He runs like the wind. I have named him Invierno."

"Leeka told me when he came to see me in Albuquerque." She was strongly aware of the rancid odor of smoke and perspiration which clung to his clothing. "Was the fire a bad one? You were not burned, were you?"

"No, I wasn't hurt. Some of the men were, though. After the first fire, they flew us on to a second. We got paid twice." His teeth flashed white against his dark face. "We stopped in Denver to spend our money. I got boots. Do you like them?"

Natachu looked down at his feet. The boots were soft leather. There were gold inlays around the holes for the laces, and the thongs themselves were tipped with gold.

"They are beautiful," she said sincerely. "I've never seen anyone with boots like those."

"I got a gun as well, a Winchester." He had it in a leather carrying case, strapped across his shoulders. He



unstrapped it now and lowered it until the butt rested upon the ground. "There were some silver pistols I wanted to buy, but I ran out of money."

"But you said you were paid twice." Natachu stared at him. "Do you mean that you spent everything you earned?"

Matcito looked surprised at the question. "I might never have had enough money to buy these boots again. And my old gun—well, it's old. This one is new."

"I had thought you might bring back the money," said Natachu. She shoved aside her disappointment. "Oh, well, you had no way of knowing. We will manage. Perhaps I can get a pay job right away, baby-sitting in the evenings."

"Baby-sitting? What is that?" Matcito asked curiously.

"It's when you are hired to stay with children while their parents go out," explained Natachu. She forestalled the next question by saying, "The white people do not live as we do, with aunts and cousins and grandparents in the same house. They have to call on outsiders when they need someone to stay with the babies."

"Do you mean, then, that you are going back to Albuquerque?" Matcito seemed disconcerted. "I had thought—that you and I—"

"I am not going back; *we* are!" The plan was a leaping, shining thing within her. "Oh, Matcito, I have had the most wonderful idea! *You* will come to Albuquerque too!"

"I come to the city?" He stared at her as though sure he had not heard her correctly. "Why would I do a thing like that?"

"To finish school! To go on to college, or perhaps a trade school! I'm sure Mr. Nelson will help us find some

kind of part-time jobs to live on!" The words came tumbling out, one on top of another, in her enthusiasm. "We'll be like Leeka and Maria—we'll have our own home away from the family." A bonus benefit occurred to her. "We won't have to live with Grandmother! Our children will grow up to be Indians, but educated Indians! They will be doctors and scientists and authors!"

"You're out of your mind," Matcito said shortly. "I am not a Bahana. My life is here at the pueblo."

"You can't mean that." She was prepared to argue. It would take time to raise his enthusiasm to a peak that matched her own. "What is there for us here?"

"The same things there were for our fathers. This is our home, the place of our people. It is where we belong. Why, with all these things you plan for us to do in the Bahana world"—he made a derogatory gesture—"there wouldn't even be time to ride my horse!"

"But, you could *be* somebody," insisted Natachu. "You could make something of yourself." She sought for further enticement. "With the schooling and training you could get there, you could earn more money."

"I earn all I need to live on." Matcito shrugged his shoulders. "The government is never going to let us starve, Natachu."

These were the words that shattered the dream. Standing there, with further arguments already trembling on her lips, Natachu felt the pieces falling to earth about her. The singing within her grew still.

Matcito's face was poised above her own, as handsome as ever. She raised a hand and touched his cheek.



"I'm sorry," she said softly. "I should not have suggested these things. It was not my place, as a woman."

Matcito seemed surprised and pleased at the sudden caress.

"You *have* missed me!"

"I miss you now," said Natachu.

It was a strange thing to say, and yet she meant it. Suddenly, the loneliness within her was greater than it had been before. I wish, she thought, that I had not come back at all. I wish I had not seen him.

He had not changed. He was just as he had been before, a good-looking Indian lad who hunted and fished and ran the Chongo. He had no ambitions for the future. He was not worried about tomorrow. He was contented in the present, with his new horse and his boots with gold-tipped laces. She had loved him—perhaps, in a way, she still loved him. But, in the meantime, she had known Alan.

Matcito's cheek was smooth beneath her fingers, and her heart ached with the knowledge that this was not enough. It will never be enough again, she thought sadly. I have more in common with a Bahana boy than I do with a man of my own people.

When Natachu returned to the house, the children had eaten and were in the front yard playing in the snow. Her father and uncle were attending a council at the kiva, and the place seemed strangely empty.

Her grandmother sat by the cookstove, and her mother knelt on the floor before the tin tub scrubbing clothes. Natachu stood watching her for a moment. Then she glanced across at the washing machine, standing silent and unused in its corner.

"Doesn't it work?"

Her mother raised her head. "The machine? Yes, it works. At least, it did when Leeka was here."

"You mean that you don't use it? After all the trouble Leeka went to in order to get it for you?"

"It was very good of him," said her mother. She lifted a pair of Benjamin's blue jeans and slapped them hard against the side of the tub.

"But why?" asked Natachu in bewilderment. "If it works, why don't you use it?"

It was Grandmother who answered, turning a little in her chair so that the heat of the fire could toast her back. "We have always done the washing by hand."

"Yes, but we have never had a machine before!" exclaimed Natachu. "Now that we do—"

"I have always washed the clothes by hand," interrupted Grandmother. "My mother before me washed clothes by hand. Her mother before her washed clothes by hand."

"Yes, but—"

"It is the way it has always been," said the old woman.

Natachu turned helplessly to her mother. "There is a machine at the Boyntons'. All you have to do to work it is to put the clothes and soap in it and push a button!"

"Natachu," her mother said resignedly, "your grandmother has spoken."

For a long moment Natachu stood gazing at the two women. Then she made her decision. She turned and started across the room. "I must pack my things. Mr. Boynton is picking me up in the plaza at noon."

"You are going back with him?" There was bitterness in her grandmother's voice. Deliberately she leaned for-



ward and spat upon the floor. "To think that a grandchild of mine should be a two-heart!"

"I am not a two-heart," said Martha quietly. "I have learned today how far I have come from what I thought of as home. I am torn apart no longer. My skin may still be that of an Indian, but my mind and heart are those of a Bahana."



"I DON'T KNOW why you have to go out all the time," said Daniel. "You're getting as bad as Laurie and Mother."

He was standing close behind Martha, watching her put on lipstick. She could feel his warm breath on the back of her neck and see his tense little face reflected with her own in the dressing table mirror.

"Please, Danny," she said, "can't you move back a little? You're going to make me smudge it."

"Now you *sound* like Mother," Dan muttered resentfully.

"I liked her better when she looked like an Indian," remarked Teddy candidly.

Frowning in concentration, Martha drew the lipstick along the inside line of her lower lip in the way that she had discovered made it appear less full than it naturally was. Then, with a sigh of relief to have the job completed, she recapped the stick and leaned back to view the effect.

The girl who gazed back at her from the depths of the



mirror was quite different from the one who had returned from the pueblo only a month ago. The use of makeup made the face seem narrower and more delicate, the color brighter. The carefully shaped eyebrows drew attention from the Mongolian features and emphasized the beauty of the deep-set, almond eyes.

But it was the hair that made the greatest difference. No longer did it hang in its heavy bang across her forehead. Thinned and shaped, it now curled softly about her face in the same fluffy style as Laurie's.

Cutting her hair had not been easy. Taboos of her childhood had flocked about her. For as long as she could remember, the trimming of hair had been a sacred operation, performed with special rites only at certain times of the year. She could remember her grandmother's telling her of the time when the invading white men first insisted upon cutting the hair of the Indian men. This had been accomplished by main force, and afterward the strongest braves were known to weep in shame and anger at the disgrace of their shorn condition.

Still, she had forced herself to do it. "If I am going to be a Bahana," she had told herself doggedly, "I will follow Bahana customs." Even after she had used the scissors, she had been tempted to save the cuttings to combine with those of the rest of the family in making haircords. For only a moment she had considered it, and then, with a shrug of defiance, she had swept the clippings into a pile and deposited them in the wastebasket.

Setting her hair had been even more of a problem. For weeks she had experimented with bobby pins and rollers.

Finally, after a series of drastic results, she had swallowed her pride to the point of asking Mrs. Boynton for assistance.

"If you could show me once," she had suggested timidly, "I'm sure I could manage to do it correctly."

Instead of volunteering her own assistance, Mrs. Boynton had insisted upon taking Martha to a beauty parlor for a full demonstration. Now, scrutinizing the effect, the girl knew that it had been more than worth it.

"Where are you going?" asked Teddy. "To a party?"

"Heavens, no! Not on a school night." Martha straightened the belt of the blue wool dress which she had recently inherited from Laurie. With the hem adjusted to a fashionable length and the replacement of some broken buttons, it came close to resembling a new purchase.

"If you're not going to a party," persisted Teddy, "where are you going?"

Daniel, who had been sulking, broke his silence long enough to ask, "Who's going to stay with us while you're gone?" Both his parents were attending a Civic Club meeting, and neither boy ever thought of his sister in terms of baby-sitting.

"I'm not going anywhere," Martha told them impatiently. "Alan is coming over to study. We have a test tomorrow in American Government."

"What are you getting so dressed up for then? You always get dressed up when Alan comes over." Teddy paused and then added, as an afterthought, "I like your fiesta dress better."

He was interrupted by the ring of the doorbell. There



were footsteps in the hall below and the sound of the door opening. Then Laurie's light voice rang up the stairs, "Martha, it's Alan!"

When she went down, Martha found the two seated in the living room, Alan in the big armchair and Laurie, with her feet curled under her, on the sofa. They were laughing together, and Laurie's face held the half-teasing, half-admiring look that meant she was conversing with a boy—*any* boy, Martha knew, from the ten-year-old boy who delivered newspapers to Chuck Armstrong himself.

"Alan," she was saying, "you *are* funny! I never realized before how amusing you could be! We'll have to talk together more often."

"Talking is probably my best sport; you don't need height to make a go of it." Alan glanced up and saw Martha in the doorway. He had been smiling at Laurie, but now the smile changed and grew somehow softer, in a look that was only for Martha. "Hi, fellow student! Ready to do some cramming for tomorrow?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," Martha answered. "Miss Raye told me today that this test is going to count for a large part of our grade this quarter."

It was the way they always talked together, casually and easily, without a hint that there was anything deeper between them than friendly companionship. It was almost the way it had been before Martha went home for Christmas—almost—but not quite. The "not quite" lay between them like a gentle secret, tender and untried. Neither of them referred to it, but both were aware that it was there.

As Alan got to his feet, Laurie did also, picking up her handbag when she rose. She stood taller than he did, and

Martha noticed that she was wearing high heels. Laurie's eyes flicked to the clock on the mantel.

"I'd better be going."

"Don't you want to study with us?" Alan asked her. "You have the same quiz coming up that we do. According to Miss Raye, it's going to be a humdinger."

"Thanks, but I can't," Laurie replied blandly. "I'm going to the library. I have to look up some things I missed in class."

"That shouldn't be necessary," Alan told her. "I've kept complete notes, and so has Martha. We can all three review from those."

For an instant, Laurie seemed flustered. Then, as quickly as she had lost it, her composure returned to her. She shook her head regretfully.

"That's sweet of you, but I couldn't; it just wouldn't be fair that way. Besides, I always remember facts better if I look them up myself."

"But how are you going to get there? It's a nasty night for walking. Are you going with anybody, or is your dad going to pick you up afterward?"

"I'll take a bus," Laurie told him. Her blue eyes narrowed slightly, and a hint of impatience crept into her voice. "Alan, please don't agonize so much. One would think you were my older brother. I go to the library lots of evenings and get home safely. Lately, in fact, I've practically been *living* at the library."

Her coat was thrown over the arm of the sofa. She picked it up and Alan helped her put it on. With a nod at each of them, she went out into the hall, and, a moment



later, they heard the front door open and close behind her.

Alan turned to Martha with an expression of bewilderment. "What's with Laurie? I've never seen her act so irritable. She didn't seem like that when I first got here. Did I say something to make her mad?"

"Laurie never gets mad," said Martha dryly. "You know that. She's always perfectly charming."

"Well, sure she is. But tonight—"

He looked so confused that Martha felt sorry for him.

"Don't worry, Alan; it wasn't anything that you did. Laurie just doesn't like to be pinned down about things, that's all. Shall we get started on the studying?"

She had barely finished speaking when a car door slammed in the street in front of the house. A moment later, there was the sound of an engine starting and a grind of wheels as a car pulled away from the curbing.

Alan glanced toward the window. "I thought she said she was taking a bus. That sounded like somebody picking her up in a sports car." He paused. "It was Chuck, wasn't it?"

"I don't know any more about it than you do. Laurie never confides in me, and I never ask her." Martha gathered up her books and carried them into the dining room.

Alan trailed behind her. "I don't like being lied to. And why should she bother to lie, anyway? It doesn't matter to *me* whom she goes out with or whether or not she studies." He regarded Martha closely. "You knew all along that she wasn't going to the library, didn't you?"

Martha switched on the overhead light and spread her books on the table. To her own amazement, she found

herself strangely defensive about Alan's condemnation of the girl whom she herself had never been able to like.

"There is an Indian saying—'Don't judge a person until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.' We do not know what Laurie is feeling. Perhaps she is so much in love with Chuck that she cannot help what she does."

"Anybody can help what he does. Besides, I don't think Laurie knows what love is. I think she's fascinated by Chuck because he's the first guy she has ever wanted who didn't fall down at her feet and ask to be walked on."

"Perhaps so. Still, Laurie isn't like other girls. She is so pretty and so charming, and she is used to having everything the way she wants it. People *like* to give Laurie her way. It makes them happy."

"I don't care how pretty or charming she is, she lies like a real pro." There was nothing but disgust in Alan's voice. He seated himself at the table and opened his notebook. "Want to start with the House of Representatives?" It was a clear attempt to change the subject.

"It is as good a place to start as any," answered Martha. She smiled across at him, at the bristle of cinnamon hair bent over the pile of papers, at the bright intelligence of the freckled face. Despite the difference in their heritage and backgrounds, how much more she had in common with this boy than with Matcito! And to think that she had come close to marrying Matcito, had even begun to plan their life together! It is good, she thought—it is so very good—that I came back again.

Mr. Boynton, true to his word, had driven into the plaza at midday. He had appeared pleased—but not surprised—to find her waiting. "I thought you might reconsider," he



said as he took her bag and loaded it into the back seat. "Aren't you going to wear your coat?"

"I left it for my mother." Martha climbed in beside him, feeling a little awkward. "It wasn't the way I thought it would be here. I hadn't remembered it was so—so—"

"You don't have to explain," Mr. Boynton had said kindly.

They had driven in companionable silence through the streets of the pueblo. The kind snow had turned it momentarily into a picture-book village, covering the dirt and the squalor, accentuating the quaintness and charm of the terraced buildings.

I will come back someday, thought Martha, when I am a grown woman. I will come for the summer dances like the rest of the tourists. I will laugh at the mudhead clowns and buy postcards and bring my own drinking water in a Thermos. I will see weary-faced women scrubbing clothes in tin buckets, and bandy-legged children drinking soda out of dirty bottles, and men in gold inlaid boots sprawled lazily on rooftops. Fifty years—a hundred years from now—it will be here, unchanged, just as it is today.

They had passed the missions, the Trading Post, the cattle guard—and then it was all behind them. For one brief instant Martha glanced back, but the glare of sunlight on the snow obliterated the last faint trace of chimney smoke. She straightened in her seat and focused her eyes upon the road ahead.

Life at the Boyntons' had resumed easily, as though she had never been away. When she arrived, Daniel and Teddy were waiting in the living room window and imme-

diately dragged her upstairs to admire their mountain of Christmas toys. Mrs. Boynton looked as stunning as ever, but there were lines of fatigue at the corners of her eyes, and it seemed to Martha that her face appeared thinner than when she had last seen her.

"Your mother looks tired," she commented to Daniel, and he nodded sullenly.

"If she didn't go out all the time, she wouldn't be."

Martha frowned reprovably, although she secretly agreed with him. "It is not right for children to criticize their parents," she said sternly.

"I'm not criticizing; I'm just *saying*," Daniel blinked furiously. "She is always going someplace to do something. All during Christmas she was at parties and things, and Teddy and I had to stay home with a baby sitter. Dad didn't want to go out so much—it was Mother. She still hasn't had time to read our new books to us or even *look* at the Erector Set. I think she goes out so she won't have to bother about me."

His voice held so much bitterness that Martha was startled. "Dan," she said sharply, "that is ridiculous! Even when she's tired, your mother loves you. You are her own son!"

"I don't think I am," said Daniel. "I think I'm adopted."

For a moment Martha was too shocked to answer. Then she reached over and gripped him by the shoulders. "Dan Boynton, what are you talking about? How can you possibly say such a thing!"

"Well, I don't look like anybody," said Daniel. "Laurie looks just like Mother. Teddy looks sort of like both my parents, and he's cute—he knows how to *make* himself be



cute." He regarded Martha earnestly. "I can say all the same things he does, and nobody thinks I'm darling. Besides, I have to wear glasses. Nobody else does."

"Your father wore them when he was a little boy," Martha reminded him. "I heard him telling Teddy about it one night."

"But he doesn't wear them now. I have to wear mine all the time, or I bump into things. I bet my real parents wear glasses too. I bet I look just like them. Someday I'm going to go out and find them, and when I do, I bet they say to each other, 'Boy, oh, boy, there's a kid who belongs right in our family! Why were we ever nuts enough to let him out to be adopted?'"

His face was twitching nervously, and beneath her hands, Martha could feel his thin shoulders shaking. With a sudden impulsive gesture, she put her arms around him and drew him close.

"Calm down, Danny," she said soothingly. "You're getting all upset about nothing. Everybody in a family doesn't have to look like everybody else. The members of lots of families don't look like each other at all."

She expected him to stiffen and pull away, but, to her surprise, he did not do so. Instead, he remained leaning against her, his face pressed into her shoulder. When he spoke again, his voice was muffled.

"Tell me about your brother who's my age. Do you think he would like me?"

"Of course he would!" exclaimed Martha, grateful for the change of subject. "Benjamin likes everybody. He is shorter than you are, but he is built like you. He has never been chubby the way Teddy is. He can chop wood and

fish and ride horseback. And he likes to build model airplanes."

"I bet he'd like my Erector Set," said Daniel. He drew a deep breath, and she could feel him relax a little. "Does he ever wear feathers?"

Martha smiled at the familiar question. "There was a time last year when he wore them," she answered. "It was right after his initiation. You see, when Indian children, girls as well as boys, reach a certain age, somewhere between six and ten, they are initiated into the secret cult of the Kachinas."

Daniel's eyes grew wide. "Will you tell me about it?"

"Well," Martha began slowly, making it into a story, "the children who are to be initiated go down into the kiva. That's a kind of meeting house where they have the ceremony. The parents go with them, and each child carries an ear of white corn. When they reach the bottom of the ladder, they step into a ring made of yucca leaves. The ring is lifted and lowered four times, and everyone prays for the children, that they will grow up brave and strong and live for a long time and always be happy."

Daniel was fascinated. "And then what happens?"

"Then the priest, into whom the spirit of the god of Growing has entered, comes down the ladder and talks to the children. He tells them the story of their people, the reasons why they should be proud to be members of the Kachinas. Then, suddenly, there is a loud noise, a yelling and banging and clattering of rattles. That announces the arrival of the floggers."

"The floggers?" exclaimed Daniel. "What do they do?"

"They strip the children of their clothing and whip them



with yucca lashes. It is a warning of what will happen to anyone who betrays the Kachinas. You see, once the children are members of the Cult, they will be told all the secrets. They must not ever give them away to outsiders."

"Doesn't the whipping hurt them?" asked Daniel in awe. By now he had completely forgotten his own problems.

"Yes, it hurts," admitted Martha, "but not for long. After the first blows, the fathers come and stand in front of the children. No Indian child would dare to cry or act frightened. If he did, he would not receive his feathers."

Daniel gave a sigh of satisfaction. "I bet they're proud of their feathers when they finally have them."

"They certainly are," Martha told him. "They all wear them to school the next morning."

She had stayed for a long while after that, holding him and talking, while the living room remained unvacuumed and the dinner unstirred in the house below. She could feel the tension easing out of him under the warmth of her undivided attention. It takes so little, she had thought in wonder, to make him happy. But it should not be I who gives this. It should be his mother. . . .

The night before the American Government examination, Mr. and Mrs. Boynton returned from their Civic Club meeting at ten-thirty. They paused at the entrance to the dining room, where Martha and Alan were still studying. Seeing them standing there together, he so tall and distinguished-looking, she so elegantly lovely, Martha could not help but notice what an unusually attractive couple they were. The girl's resentment of Mrs. Boynton

faded slightly as she asked with apparent concern, "Did the boys settle down all right this evening?"

"You look as though you've been working hard," observed Mr. Boynton, noting with obvious approval the books and papers strewn across the table. "Has Laurie been studying with you? Don't tell me she has turned in already?"

Alan, who had risen to his feet, glanced uncomfortably at Martha. "Well, she—"

"It's good that she has," Mrs. Boynton interrupted. "A girl her age needs her beauty sleep. In fact, right now, I can't think of anything nicer than going to bed and sleeping for a week myself." She flashed her quick, bright smile, but it was underlined with unconcealable weariness.

Mr. Boynton's face darkened with concern. "There's no reason why you shouldn't," he said gravely. "Martha and I can take care of the boys. Why don't you spend the day in bed tomorrow and see if you can't catch up a little?"

"Oh, Ted, really!" There was a sharp note in Mrs. Boynton's voice. "You make me sound as though I were a hundred and two years old. Just because I have a teen-age daughter is no reason to retire me to a rocking chair."

"I wasn't trying to do that," her husband said stiffly. "There is no reason for you to keep up with as many activities as Laurie does. Sometimes I almost have the feeling that you're trying to compete with her."

"If that's supposed to be a joke," said Mrs. Boynton, "I'm afraid I don't find it amusing."

"I'm sorry," Mr. Boynton said contritely. "It's just that





when you're a grown woman with a family, you shouldn't feel you have to keep up with standards you set a long time ago. There's enough to do, just being a mother. I worry about you, Doris. I don't see how a day in bed could possibly hurt you."

"It's impossible," Mrs. Boynton said briskly. "I have a Woman's Service League meeting at ten in the morning. After that, I'm going to Helen Mills' for lunch and bridge. It's not tomorrow that you have your singing lesson, is it, Martha?"

"Yes, it is," Martha answered apprehensively. The idea of missing a precious lesson was a disappointment hard to accept. "I can try to switch it to another day, though, if you need me to take care of the children."

"That won't be necessary, Martha. I'll get the Freeberg girl to watch the boys. You'll still be home in time to start dinner."

"Is there any reason," Mr. Boynton asked her, "why Laurie can't occasionally baby-sit with her brothers?"

"It's just as easy to get Glinda Freeberg," his wife told him. "Laurie is working so hard these days. She studies at the library almost every evening. She should have her afternoons free for a little recreation and social life." She drew a deep breath. "She is only young once, you know."

"Well, so are Martha and Glinda Freeberg." Mr. Boynton held out his hand to Alan. "It was good seeing you again, Al. Good night, Martha. Lock up after Alan leaves, won't you?"

"I will, sir," Martha promised. "Good night."

It was not until the footsteps of Mr. and Mrs. Boynton had faded into the back of the house that Alan spoke.

When he did, it was so softly that it was almost a whisper.

"How can you lock up with Laurie still out?"

"I can't," said Martha. "I'll have to wait for her."

"But that could be hours. You'll be dead in the morning, and you have this exam to take."

"Oh, it won't be that bad," Martha assured him lightly. "She can't stay out too much longer."

"Why don't you just leave a note for her? Ask her to lock up after herself."

Martha was tempted. Then she shook her head. "One of her parents might come out for something and find the note. Besides, she's bound to be home soon."

"I don't care if she is," muttered Alan. "I don't like to see you covering for her. If she is going to be a sneak, she ought to be able to take her own risks." He gathered up his papers and stacked them in his notebook. Then his face softened. "Well—till tomorrow, then."

"Till tomorrow," echoed Martha. They smiled at each other. Then their faces stiffened as they heard an automobile engine. It came closer and closer and stopped in front of the house. After a prolonged silence, there came the muffled sound of a car door closing, and the engine started up again.

The front door opened, and Laurie came into the house. She seemed surprised to find Martha and Alan standing in the hallway. "Hi! Are you two finished studying?"

"We got a lot done tonight, thank you." Alan regarded her squarely. "Did you?"

"Oh, yes—yes, thank you." Laurie passed the other two dreamily and started up the stairs. Halfway up, she paused



and turned back again. "I noticed the car is home. Did Daddy and Mother—ask about me?"

"They thought you had already gone to bed," Martha told her.

For a moment they stood there, the bright-haired girl on the stairway, the dark-haired girl in the hall below. Their eyes met and held—and Martha was surprised to see in Laurie's a look of gratitude. For an instant it flickered there, like a bridge between them.

Then Laurie said "Thank you" and turned and went upstairs.



AS FAR AS Martha was concerned, the weeks no longer started on Monday; they began in earnest on Wednesday afternoons. These and Fridays were the days on which she had voice lessons at the Albuquerque Music School. She had started the lessons soon after returning from Christmas vacation, and from then on the weeks seemed to pass with a speed she would never have guessed was possible.

"For the first time in my life," she told Alan, "I feel as though I am accomplishing something. I have found a direction and am going somewhere."

"Isn't Albuquerque Music School the one Barbara Baily goes to?" Alan asked with interest. "She has been studying a couple of years, hasn't she?"

"I don't know," Martha answered. "I've never talked to her."

"You should. She's a dedicated gal. Her folks have been scrimping like mad to give her singing lessons. They hope that someday she'll be good enough to sing professionally."



"She does have a lovely voice," Martha admitted. She had seen the pretty, dark-haired girl many times since entering high school, both in chorus practice and in the halls, but neither of them had ever spoken to the other. Sometimes Martha felt that Barbara was ready to do so, but she herself could never look at this girl without remembering that first morning in the bookroom, when Barbara had not wanted to share a locker.

At the beginning of her second semester, Martha had finally been assigned a lockermate, a Navajo girl by the name of Rose Chuyate. Rose was thin and narrow-faced, and although she was a grade below Martha in school, she stood a good six inches taller. She seemed to have no friends and no particular interests, and the only times she and Martha saw each other were when they both happened to arrive at the locker at the same moment. When this happened, they sorted out their books with a minimum of comment and parted with as few words as possible.

"What's the matter with you two?" Alan asked in bewilderment after witnessing this silent encounter for the first time. "I should think you would be great friends, having so much in common."

"In common!" Martha explained in astonishment. "Alan, Rose Chuyate is a Navajo!"

"Well, so? She is an Indian, isn't she? What difference does it make what kind?"

"It makes a tremendous difference," Martha told him. "No self-respecting pueblo Indian would have anything to do with a Forehead."

Alan shook his head. "I must have been missing something somewhere along the line. What on earth is a Forehead?"

"It's our name for the Navajo people. You see, they don't wear the bang the way we do; they brush their hair straight back." Martha spoke solemnly. "They are a lazy people. They don't build homes or raise crops or live in villages. They simply wander around from one end of their reservation to the other, herding their sheep and horses and taking what they want where they find it. They have always been our enemies."

"If they are shepherds, of course they move around," Alan objected sensibly. "They need to find grazing ground. Besides, Rose isn't wandering anyplace. She is going to school here in Albuquerque, just as you are. Maybe if you were friendly to her, you would find that you liked her."

"She is a Navajo," said Martha.

"But, surely that doesn't—"

"Alan, don't you understand?" It was hard to imagine his being so dense about something so obvious. "She is a Navajo. The pueblo people are *never* friends with Navajos."

It was the closest they had ever come to an argument. For a moment it had seemed that Alan might pursue the subject further. Then he had reached over and taken her books and piled them on top of his.

"I guess we're at an impasse."

"A what?"

"An impasse—a place where neither of us is going to convince the other. We might as well drop it." Weeks



had gone by since the conversation and, as though by mutual agreement, neither of them had referred to it since.

One evening, Alan brought his guitar over to the Boyntons' and showed Martha a few basic chords on it. "If you're going to sing," he said, "you ought to be able to accompany yourself."

"But I don't sing guitar-type songs." Martha thought of the choral selections and of the tuneless, wide-ranged exercises she repeated endlessly for her voice instructor. Neither these nor the choir hymns she sang on Sundays at the Boyntons' church were meant to be delivered to a guitar accompaniment. "What I want to sing, what I *really* want to sing, someday, is opera."

"There's no reason why you have to stick to classics only," said Alan, running his fingers across the guitar strings. "It's not going to hurt you to sing other things too. People like to hear all sorts of pieces." To prove his point, he took a deep breath and began to sing "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair."

Listening to his sweet, slightly nasal tenor carrying the nostalgic melody, Martha was moved despite herself.

"Do you suppose," she asked when he had finished, "that I could really learn to do that? To sing and play at the same time, I mean?"

"Of course you can. Some of the best songs have the fewest chords in them. Here, let me show you." He demonstrated some finger positions and then diagramed them on paper. "Go easy at first, because your fingers will really feel it. After you've practiced a while, the tips will get callused."

"I'll never be able to play without looking," Martha said helplessly, trying to fit her stubborn fingers into the positions on the diagram. Yet, after several weeks of practice, she found she was able to do so with very little difficulty.

"Play 'The Corn Maidens,'" Daniel suggested one Saturday when Alan had come over with his guitar for a practice session. "Do the part where they run away and everybody in the village is starving."

"I can't," Martha told him. "I don't know the chords for it."

"What is 'The Corn Maidens'?" Alan asked with interest. "I don't believe I've ever heard of a song by that name."

"It's just an Indian legend," explained Martha. "I put it into English one day so the children could understand it. I sing it to them sometimes when I put them to bed."

"Sing it now, why don't you? I'd like to hear it."

"It really isn't anything." She began to sing, as much for Daniel as for Alan:

"This is the tale of the Seven Maidens,  
Of the Seven Corn Mothers, white and beautiful—  
Who danced all night by the rainbow fires—"

Alan, who was holding the guitar, began to strum it softly. By the time she had sung two verses, he was accompanying her. They continued together through the tale of Paiyatuma, the god of Dew and of Dawn, and his rescue of the Maidens from the Land of Always-Summer and his return of them to the starving pueblo.

Martha's voice took on a note of joy as she sang the ending:





"The Corn sprang up in the weary fields,  
To greet again their dear, white Maidens,  
The birds and the butterflies danced before them;  
The girls of the village ran forth to meet them  
And danced for the Corn in the fields of summer.  
The gods come down and danced beside them.  
And so, each year, we too assemble  
And sing our thanks to Paiyatuma,  
And dance for the love of the Seven Maidens,  
The Seven Corn Mothers, white and beautiful."

When the song was over, Martha looked across at Alan, and they exclaimed with one voice: "That was wonderful!" Then they both burst out laughing.

"Could you teach me the chords?" she asked him eagerly. "How could you possibly pick them out so easily?"

"They're simple. You can pick them out yourself, I'm certain." He looked strangely excited. "That song—have you written it down? Do you know any others?"

"I know many songs," answered Martha, "but I haven't put them into English. I suppose I ought to; the boys would enjoy them. There is a very funny one about a coyote who eats a cactus."

"Oh, sing that!" demanded Daniel, his face lighting. "Please sing that one!"

"I'll work on it. Perhaps I can sing it for you tomorrow."

"Let's write this one down before you forget it." Alan fumbled in his pocket for a pencil. "Can you find some paper? Gosh, Martha, this is an authentic Indian ballad. Most people go their whole lives through without ever hearing one."

Martha was surprised at his excitement. "I don't imagine those people feel as though they have missed anything."

Do you want to run up to my room, Danny, and get my notebook? It's on my desk. Oh, and you had better bring down an extra pencil."

Martha and Alan worked together all afternoon, transcribing words and music onto paper. As Martha hummed the melody, she herself began to recognize the chords that went with it. They completed "The Corn Maidens" and began on "The Coyote and the Cactus." By the time Martha had to stop to prepare dinner, they had almost finished the latter.

"I bet you never thought you would be a song writer," exclaimed Alan, slipping his arms into the sleeves of his jacket. "You have just the right kind of voice for ballads."

Martha shrugged slightly. "Thank you, but—well, ballads aren't real singing. They are just something you do in front of the fire on winter evenings."

"That's right—you like opera." He was buttoning his jacket slowly, still not leaving. "You know, there's a traveling opera company coming to Albuquerque next weekend. It's being advertised in the papers. They are going to sing *Carmen*."

"I've heard about it," Martha said wistfully. "Can you imagine having a life like that, traveling all over the country singing?"

"Would you like to go hear them?"

Martha stared at him. "Do you mean that you have tickets?"

"I don't have them yet, but I can get them—that is, if you would like to go. Which night would be better, Friday or Saturday?"

"I'd love to go," Martha told him, "but I'll have to ask



the Boyntons. I don't know what plans they have for the weekend." She could hear her voice speaking quite naturally, as though she were forever being invited to attend operas.

"Well, check with them, and I'll call you tomorrow. I'm glad you want to go with me." He finished fastening the last button of his jacket, then raised his hand in a half salute. "Until tomorrow!"

"Until tomorrow!" echoed Martha in their usual farewell. Then, as the door closed behind him, the calm vanished. Excitement came sweeping over her.

I'm going to an opera—a real opera, live on a stage! She leaned against the door, weak with wonder. I—Martha Weekoty—am going to an opera! And I'm going—and this, she realized suddenly, was the reason why her heart was pounding and her legs were weak beneath her—I am going to have my first real date with Alan!

The Boyntons had a dinner engagement scheduled for the following Saturday. They had made no plans, however, for Friday, and agreed to stay home that evening so that Martha could go out.

"I'd say she deserves it," Mr. Boynton said approvingly. "That girl hasn't done anything but work and study since she came here."

"It's nice that she can attend the opera." Mrs. Boynton sounded less enthusiastic. "I'm not so sure about her going with Alan Wallace."

"Why not?" Mr. Boynton asked in surprise. "He seems like a nice, well-mannered young fellow. I like him better than that cocky Armstrong boy that Laurie seems so sold on."

"That's not what I mean," Mrs. Boynton glanced toward the kitchen door and, seeing it securely closed, resumed speaking, but in a lower voice. "I don't want to sound prejudiced; I've grown extremely fond of Martha since she has been here. In fact, most of the time I don't even remember anymore that she is any different from the rest of us. The fact is, though, that she is Indian and Alan is Caucasian. It could certainly create problems."

"Listen to me, Doris, she's not marrying the kid," Mr. Boynton said irritably. "She's just going to an opera with him. I don't see what kind of problems could come from that."

"It's just that one thing can lead to another. Alan is a likable boy, not handsome, but quite—appealing. And Martha has a different sort of attractiveness. Actually, since she has had her hair done, she is almost pretty." She looked worriedly at her husband. "We are responsible for her, Ted."

His eyes softened as he saw that her concern was genuine. "Martha came here to go to school, not to find herself a husband. She is an intelligent girl. I am sure that she is very much aware of the problems involved in intermarriage."

Mrs. Boynton still did not seem convinced. "He spends so much time here."

"Well, the girl has to have *some* friends. Laurie certainly hasn't turned out to be much of a companion for her."

"Laurie is so busy," Mrs. Boynton said defensively. "She is involved in so many activities. She studies at the library every weekday evening and dates Chuck on weekends."

"Like mother, like daughter." Her husband smiled at



her fondly, but there was a hint of weariness in his voice. "It will be nice to have a weekend evening at home for a change. Martha should go out more often."

For Martha herself, the week crawled past with maddening slowness, in contrast with those that had flown before it. Each day seemed to bring something new to think about. First among her problems was how to dress for the evening.

Choosing a dress was, in itself, not difficult, for there were so few from which to select. The blue wool which had been Laurie's was the only possible choice. It was a simple dress and, to Martha's untrained eye, not a particularly striking one. She knew, however, that she could be secure in its quality and in the fact that it was in good taste. Laurie would never have seen fit to own it otherwise.

It was the matter of shoes that bothered her. She possessed only one pair of scuffed, flat-heeled loafers which her father had purchased for her over a year before, from the Trader. She knew that they were inappropriate for an evening at the opera, but there was no way of obtaining others.

"I wish," she mourned for the hundredth time, "that I had some money."

A lack of spending money was something that had never bothered her at the pueblo. There her needs had been few and uncomplicated. If she had not wished to wear her shoes, she had simply gone barefooted. Now, however, she found herself in constant need of one thing or another. She received a small weekly allowance from the Boyntons, but, unused to handling money, she was barely able to make it stretch to cover school needs and small, personal

necessities. There was never enough left over to save toward such luxuries as dress shoes with heels.

And I was so confident, she thought wryly, about suggesting that Matcito come to Albuquerque and join me in school here. The question of what we would live on seemed such an insignificant one. But I am learning—slowly—but learning. This Bahana world is not such an easy one when everything is considered.

With a sigh of resignation, she polished the loafers, trying to bring out whatever finish remained to them. Thursday night she washed and set her hair. By the time Friday evening finally arrived, she was in a turmoil of anticipation.

Alan called for her at seven-thirty. He looked stiff and formal in his navy blue suit, with a white shirt and dark tie and the edge of a handkerchief protruding from a jacket pocket. Formal, and somehow older, Martha thought, as she stood at the top of the stairs, gazing down at him. Then he grinned—and he was Alan—the same Alan as always, only dressed differently. She hurried down to him.

"You look nice." Ignoring the loafers, he nodded at her approvingly. "Don't you think, though, that you will need a coat?"

"I don't think so. This is a warm dress." For the first time since her return, Martha regretted having left the red coat home at the pueblo for her mother to wear. I will not, she thought decidedly, I simply will *not* go to an opera wearing Laurie's old yellow slicker. The shoes are bad enough, but that would be ghastly!

"Well, if you're sure that you will be warm enough,"



Alan said doubtfully. Then, as he opened the door for her, he added as an afterthought, "I forgot to tell you, we're doubling. We're going with Rad Connors and his date, Barbara Baily."



*Carmen* was wonderful. Surrounded by darkness, lost in the music, Martha was unaware of any reality except the stage before her and the brightly garbed figures and glorious voices originating there.

The others seemed to feel as she did, for it was a quiet group which returned to the car after the performance. It was as though each of them was afraid to speak for fear that the sound of a voice might shatter the magic that hung upon them.

Finally, Rad broke the silence. He was a deep-voiced, heavy-set boy who sang bass with the high school chorus, and it was his car they were using for transportation.

"Would you like to stop someplace," he asked, "before we go home?"

"Yes, let's," said Alan. "I'm not ready to end the evening yet."

In unison, Martha and Barbara responded, "Neither am I."

The surprise of hearing two voices speaking the same



words at the same instant startled all four of them. Barbara turned in the front seat so that she was looking back at Martha.

She smiled hesitantly. "It was—glorious—wasn't it?"

"Yes," Martha answered, "it was."

"Imagine composing a masterpiece like that!" Rad's deep voice was gruff with awe. "Think of the feeling of having created it! Why, it makes you want to go out and make things—do things—"

"Imagine singing it!" breathed Barbara. "It's everything I've ever dreamed about, ever since I was tiny. Of course, there are probably a million other girls with voices every bit as good as mine dreaming about the same future."

"It would take a lot of training, no matter how good your voice was to start with," Alan reminded her. "Knowing how to use your voice, instead of letting your voice use you."

"And training means money," Martha said quietly. She had not meant to say it. The words had slipped from her without anticipation. Now she stopped short, embarrassed.

To her surprise, Barbara nodded solemnly. "That's the hard part of it. Having talent and being willing to work are only a fraction of it. When I think of the money my family has spent on me, money they needed for other things, it kind of scares me. What if I don't *have* it? What if all their sacrifices are wasted?"

A drive-in loomed up on the horizon and Rad swung the car into it. He came to a stop at an empty space beside an order rack. From his place in the driver's seat, he reached out and unhooked the speaker. "What will everybody have?"

"I'd like a Coke," said Alan, "and a hamburger. What about you, Martha?"

"A Coke, thank you." She smiled, remembering her baby sister sitting in her cradle with a bottle of soda in her hands. It seemed years instead of months since she had left the pueblo.

After the four had given their orders, Rad turned to face the back seat. "What about you, Al?" he asked with interest. "Are you going to do anything with your music? After you graduate, I mean?"

"Good gosh, no," Alan said immediately. "That's just an avocation for me, a kind of hobby. I can carry a tune and hit the right notes on a piano, but I certainly don't have what it takes to be a professional. That's more Barbara's speed—or Martha's."

"Is that what you want to do as a career, too, Martha—sing?" Barbara was regarding her with what seemed almost to be shyness. "You do have a beautiful voice. Everybody in the choral group thinks so. Are you going to go on with it?"

Martha was so startled by the unexpected compliment that she stumbled over her answer. "I'd like to. It's—it's money, of course—I mean, just as you said, training costs so much. I have applied for a scholarship."

"A music scholarship?" Barbara asked.

"Oh, no—an academic scholarship. It's offered by the United Pueblo Agency. It would mean I could attend the University."

"There *is* a music scholarship being offered, isn't there, Babs?" Rad asked. "Weren't you talking to Mr. Shelby about it the other morning?"



"Yes, there is. I'm going to try for it. That's the only way I'll get to go on with my music. My parents have a couple of younger children to educate too, and I've had my share of the education fund." Barbara turned to Martha. "Why don't you try for it too?"

"I've never heard anything about it," Martha answered. "Could I, do you suppose?"

"I don't see why not," Barbara told her. "It's a new scholarship; that's why it hasn't been publicized much. It's based on a lot of things—grades and need and personal reports from your teachers. But the main thing is performance."

"You mean you have to perform before somebody?"

"That's the final part of it, if you pass on all the other counts. The scholarship is being offered by the Nightingales; that's a woman's choral group here in Albuquerque. They have to pass on the applications and read all the references and things, and then they select the best candidates. Those are the ones who sing before the judges. The contest part is held at the fiesta in Old Town in May."

"How many winners are there?" Rad asked her.

"Only one."

"But—but, *you* are trying out for it," Martha said slowly. "We *both* couldn't win."

"No, of course not. But you deserve a chance at it, just as much as I do." Barbara's tone was matter-of-fact. "Neither one of us is going to go on into opera without much more training than we've had. It's only fair that the one with the better voice gets it."

Their food orders arrived just then, and Rad distributed them. Under cover of darkness, Alan reached over and

pressed Martha's hand. "You are going to make out an application, aren't you? There's nothing to lose by it."

"No, I guess there isn't." The idea was still so new to Martha it was hard to take it in. Alan's hand was warm on hers, a part of the magic. "What if I don't win?"

"Then you don't win," Alan replied easily. "You go on to college and do something else. No matter what happens, you'll still have your voice. You can always sing to *somebody*."

"You can sing to *me*," Rad suggested humorously. "I'll always listen to you!"

And then, suddenly, they were laughing, the four of them, easily and happily, as though they had been friends forever, and any awkwardness that had been between them was gone.

"Martha," Rad asked as they drank their Cokes, "what's it like living on a pueblo? I've been wanting to ask you. I just felt funny about doing it."

The question was sincere, with no hint of condescension, and Martha accepted it at face value. "The pueblo," she told him, "is simply a village. The pueblos themselves are actually houses. Some of them are built on a number of different levels, but those in our settlement are only one and sometimes two stories high."

"Tell them about some of the other things," Alan prodded. "Tell them about the Kachinas. I think that's as interesting as anything in the American Government course."

Martha hesitated. Were they really interested? Of course, Alan was. He was always interested in anything. But the others? She glanced at Barbara.



"Please do tell us," the dark-haired girl urged softly. "I don't know anything about the Indian way of life. I'm just beginning to realize how little I know about a lot of things."

"The Kachinas," Martha began slowly, "are magic spirits who watch over the village and bring rain and good health. They are believed to live in the underground world, beneath the Sacred Lake. A long time ago, the old ones tell us, whenever the people of the village were sad or lonely, the Kachinas would come to entertain them with dancing and singing. One day, however, when some of the young men of the village were showing off for their sweethearts, they mocked and made fun of the Kachinas. This made the magic ones so angry that they decided they would never visit the village again."

"So now the Indian people do the dances themselves," inserted Alan.

"The original Kachinas taught them," Martha continued. "They showed them how to make the masks and costumes and how to sing the songs and do the dances. Then the real Kachinas join the ceremony in spirit. When the dancer puts on his costume, his soul is taken over by the spirit of a real Kachina, and he becomes enchanted. He may not be touched by earthly people, even his own wife and children, until the ceremony is over and he is de-charmed."

There was a long moment of silence while the listeners digested the story. Then Barbara asked hesitantly, "Do you—really—believe all this?"

"It is the story of the Kachinas," said Martha.

"Yes, but—but is it a *story*—or do you accept it as true?"

"Of course she doesn't accept it," Rad answered for her.

"Martha's a Christian. It was the mission at the pueblo that got her to Albuquerque in the first place, and I've heard her talking to Mr. Shelby about singing in the church choir. Nobody could believe in God and in the magic of the Kachinas as well."

The statement was so reasonable that Martha fell silent before it. How indeed could one hold two such opposing beliefs? And yet, when she really thought about it, she found to her own amazement that she did.

The beliefs were two entirely different entities, interwoven within her. She had been taught by the Nelsons to believe in Christianity, in one God in three Persons, a Holy Trinity. She accepted this, and found a real joy and inspiration in the beautiful Christmas service at the mission, and in the story of the birth of Jesus and of His life and what it stood for. At the same time, she had been taught by her grandmother and the other elders of the village to believe in many spirits, the Rain People and Cloud People and the gods of the dew and of the dawn. All her life she had believed in the magic of the Kachinas, had accepted them and loved them and tried to pattern herself after their warmth and goodness.

Somehow, until this moment, she had managed to accept *both* religions, conflicting though they were, each on a different level of her mind. Yet now, suddenly, she realized that this was not possible. Both could not be true.

"I don't know," she said softly. Her confusion showed in her voice. "I don't know—what I believe."

"You will," Alan said gently. "A time will come when you will know." He spoke very quietly, for her ears alone.



Then he leaned forward, including the others in the conversation. "Hey, who would like another Coke?"

"This has been a lot of fun," Rad said when the four young people finally reached the Boyntons' and Alan was opening the door to help Martha from the car. "We'll all have to get together again soon. Let's not wait until another opera comes to Albuquerque in order to do it."

"What about next Friday, at my house?" suggested Barbara. "We could make it a real party. Maybe Chuck and Laurie could come also." She leaned out of the car window and called softly, "Martha?"

"Yes?" There was a note in the other girl's voice that caught her by surprise.

"I'm glad about tonight—I mean—to have had a chance to get to know you. In the beginning—well, I never knew an Indian girl. I mean—you were different. When you meet someone who is different, you feel uncomfortable because you don't know what to expect. Sometimes you do rude things that you would give anything in the world to undo afterward."

She was fumbling for words, but that did not matter. The meaning was there, sound and true, and Martha felt a rush of warmth for the girl who was trying in her own way to apologize.

"It's all right," she said. "I understand."

"I hope so." Barbara seemed relieved. "I'll see you at school Monday then. Good night."

"Good night," Rad said, and Martha's "Good night" echoed after his as she and Alan went up the walk to the house.

The Boyntons had left the outside light burning, and the door was unlocked. The hall, when they entered it, was dimly lit by the light at the top of the stairs.

"It has been a wonderful evening," said Martha, and Alan answered, "It certainly has."

They stood there a moment in silence, each knowing what was to come next, but not certain just how to proceed with it. The months of their friendship stood between them, a strange, instinctive barrier. Martha raised her face. Their eyes met, and they smiled at each other. The absurdity of their shyness swept over them.

Alan put his hands on her shoulders and leaned forward and kissed her. "There," he said softly. "That wasn't so hard. I should have done it before."

"We weren't ready before," Martha whispered.

"No, I guess we weren't." He was gazing down at her with a look that was all Alan but was something else as well, something that disturbed her and at the same time made her feel like singing. "You know," he said, "I was scared to ask you to go out with me tonight."

"You were?" She gazed at him in wonder. It was impossible to imagine Alan being afraid about anything.

"I kept thinking about that other time, before Christmas, when I asked you to the New Year's party. You turned me down so flat. You told me about that other boy back on the pueblo."

"There isn't any other boy now," Martha said slowly. "When I saw him again it—it wasn't the same."

"I thought maybe that was what had happened. When you came back, I was so glad. Still, I wasn't sure enough to ask you for a real date-type date. I didn't want to ruin



what we already had by having you turn me down again.”  
Martha smiled at him. “Barbara and Rad—they’re waiting.”

“Darn it, so they are!” He grinned at her—the familiar, lopsided, Alanish grin. “Until tomorrow!”

“Until tomorrow!” said Martha.

She stood at the door and watched him go down the sidewalk to the waiting car. He had, she thought fondly, a jaunty way of walking, a swinging, confident, happy walk. He was softly whistling an aria from *Carmen*. When he reached the car, he turned back and waved at her, and she waved from the doorway. Then she closed the door and locked it and switched off the outside light.

She mounted the stairs quietly, conscious of the silence of the sleeping house. The boys’ door was open, and as she passed their room, she could hear the even rhythm of their heavy breathing. The door to her own room was closed, and when she stopped to open it, a voice spoke from behind her.

“I’ve been waiting for you to get home. Could I talk to you a minute before you go to bed?”

Laurie was wearing pajamas and slippers, and she had a quilted bathrobe pulled around her shoulders. Without makeup, her face was strained and white, and the dark circles under her eyes were startlingly evident. Her resemblance to her mother was so striking that, for an instant, Martha was not certain which of the two was standing there.

“What is it?” she asked. “Is something wrong?”

“Yes, something is. Could you—would you mind terribly

—coming into my room for a moment? I have something to ask you.”

“All right.” Martha followed Laurie down the hall to the end room. It was the first time she had ever been invited to enter, and as she did so now, she glanced about her with curiosity.

It was a pretty room, done in turquoise and white, a delicate, feminine room which was the perfect setting for Laurie. A mirrored dressing table stood opposite the doorway, flanked on either side by bulletin boards covered with notes and snapshots. A framed photograph of Chuck, taken for the senior yearbook, stood on the dresser, where Laurie’s portable phonograph and huge collection of records took up all of one corner.

It was much as Martha had imagined it, with one exception. The table by the window was covered with schoolbooks. One lay open, and Laurie gestured toward it despairingly.

“I can’t do it! I’ve been at it all evening, and I just can’t. I’m too far behind.”

“You’ve been studying all evening?” Martha could not believe her ears. “On a weekend night?”

“It’s geometry. It was due today. I’ve missed so much of the work leading up to it that I don’t even know how to begin.” There was a note of desperation in her voice.

Martha stared at her in surprise. “Why does it matter all of a sudden like this? You’ve never worried about it before.”

“I’m flunking.” Laurie seated herself on the edge of the bed. “Miss Raye called me in today about American Gov-



ernment. I got a fifty-two on that test we took last week. Then Mr. Giffen held me after geometry class. Those are two different subjects, Martha, and I'm flunking both of them. How could it have happened?"

When Martha did not answer, Laurie did so herself. "Oh, I know how it happened, all right. I've never tried to fool you about that. I *am* behind in the work. But I never thought I'd be flunked for it! I mean, my goodness, I'm in practically every organization in school. They couldn't possibly flunk the head cheerleader and the president of the Drama Club, could they? Especially when she's vice president of the Senior Class?"

"I don't see why they couldn't," answered Martha reasonably. "Whether they *would* or not is something else."

"Well, they *will*. I learned that today. You know how nice Miss Raye always seems in class? Well, she's really not like that at all. And Mr. Giffen—I always thought he liked me! Martha, I can't flunk those two courses! I need those credits to graduate."

She was not actually crying, but her voice was shaking, as though it might break at any moment. Her despair was genuine. For the first time since she had met her, Martha felt as though she was seeing the real Laurie.

"Have you talked to your father?" she suggested. "Perhaps he could hire a tutor for you. Surely, if you studied every evening and after school hours, you could pass the finals. After all, there are still almost two months before Graduation."

"I couldn't tell Daddy," Laurie said vehemently. "He would be furious. He doesn't have any idea that I'm so far

behind. He really believes that I have been studying every evening and seeing Chuck only on weekends."

Martha could not restrain her curiosity. "What does Chuck think about all this? Aren't his grades suffering too?"

"Oh—Chuck," Laurie said bitterly. "He can't understand what I'm so concerned about. He took a light load senior year so he could concentrate on football. He isn't taking all the college preparatory courses that Daddy insisted on for me." She paused. "Do you know where Chuck is tonight?"

Martha shook her head.

"Out with Ellie Oldham. I explained to him about having to study, and he got mad. He said that if he—if he—didn't mean that much to me—"

Now her voice did break. She leaned forward, burying her face in her hands. Martha watched her, discomforted.

"Don't," she said quietly. "He isn't worth crying about."

"I know that. It's just—I've made such a mess out of everything. Imagine failing your senior year and having to stay back and repeat it all over with the juniors!"

Martha crossed to the table and stood looking down at the geometry book and the paper on which Laurie had been trying to work the problems. She studied them for a few moments in silence. "If you want to do these," she said at last, "you'll have to go back and memorize the theorems from other chapters. I can show you which ones apply."

"Would you?" asked Laurie. She raised her face from her hands. Her eyes were red, and her face was streaked and swollen. At the moment, she was not at all pretty. The



charm, which she could generate so easily at will, lay somewhere underneath, but at the moment she was making no attempt to utilize it. "Would you show me?"

Slowly, Martha nodded. Memories of the classroom at the pueblo, of small, round faces turned intently upward, surged through her mind. "I have taught people before," she said.

"I hoped you would. I didn't know. Actually, I guess I thought you wouldn't."

"Why did you think that?" Martha asked.

"Because there is no reason in the world why you should. I've never done anything for you that I didn't have to do. I resented your coming here. That first morning at the high school, I didn't forget about you; I knew you would be waiting for me. I went off with Chuck because I wanted to, because it was more convenient for me that way." She paused. "I'm sure you knew that already."

"Yes," Martha said softly.

"I could have asked Chuck to take us both home, if I had wanted to. I could have taken you with me places and introduced you and made you a part of things. I didn't, because it was awkward. It was easier just to go along and forget you."

"You don't have to tell me all of this," said Martha.

"You already know it all?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you going to help me now? Why didn't you tell Daddy, all those times when you might have got me into trouble? Why don't you hate me?"

"We have a belief—" Martha began.

"Yes?" Laurie was frankly curious.

"It is just not our way."

"What is your belief? You started to tell me."

Martha drew a deep breath. "We believe," she said slowly, "that the person who hates injures himself. He opens his body to evil spirits. His soul becomes defiled, and he is made impure and is unfit to offer his prayers to the gods."

She waited for Laurie's laughter. When it did not come, she turned to face her and found no hint of amusement in her eyes.

"That's beautiful," Laurie said softly. "Are you always able to feel that way?"

"Not always," admitted Martha, with a twinge of guilt for the uncontrolled resentment of her grandmother. "I have far to go, still, before I can keep my soul clear. I only try."

"Do all Indians believe this way?" Laurie asked her.

"Not all. The Navajos are the troublemakers." Martha wrinkled her nose in distaste. "They cannot keep their souls peaceful and unresisting. Rose Chuyate, who shares my locker, is a Navajo. She was assigned to me as a locker-mate; there was no possible way to get out of it."

She stopped speaking in surprise. Now, when there was no longer anything which could be expected to amuse her, Laurie was smiling.

"What is funny?" Martha asked.

"I've just realized something about you that you don't realize yourself yet."

"What is that?"

There was a glint of teasing in Laurie's eyes. "You are as prejudiced in your way as I have been in mine."



"Prejudiced!" exclaimed Martha in horror. "How can you say—" And then the full meaning reached her. She stared at Laurie in shocked amazement. "Why, I—I guess—I am."

Suddenly, they were laughing, at themselves and at each other. Laurie got up from the bed, glancing at her watch.

"Good heavens, it's late! I feel so much better, I actually think I can sleep now. Can we start on the geometry in the morning?"

"After I finish the housework." Martha paused, and then added pointedly, "Saturday housework takes quite a long time to finish."

Laurie regarded her with amusement and a glint of new respect. "O.K.—I'm not really as dense about such things as I like to pretend I am. Fair enough; I'll pitch in and help you." She stretched and yawned, looking like a sleepy kitten. "Good night, Martha. And—thanks."

When she was in her own room, Martha did not look in the mirror. She turned her back upon it and, undressing quickly, got into bed. Lying quiet in the darkness, it was easy to think of herself as Bahana. Her eyes could have been blue, her skin could have been the color of Laurie's.

She thought of all the evening had brought her, of the friendships that were beginning to appear, timidly, one by one, like small green shoots pushing their way finally through the winter-encrusted earth. They were not close friendships yet, and perhaps they never would be. Laurie was still Laurie, beautiful and self-centered, and, while they could now probably be friends, it was doubtful that they would ever have enough in common to find a real

closeness. With Barbara, it might be different—it was still too soon to tell about Barbara. It would take time, as all worthwhile things took time. But, tonight, they had reached each other.

The loneliness which had been for so long a part of Martha was gone, and she was aware suddenly of how heavy its weight had been. She closed her eyes and saw Alan, as he had stood there in the hallway, and felt his hands upon her shoulders and the tremor of his lips as he kissed her.

I am no longer an Indian, she told herself softly. I am now, truly, a Bahana.





THE APPLICATION FORMS for the Nightingale Scholarship were available the beginning of April. Mr. Shelby seemed pleased when Martha requested one.

"I was going to suggest that you apply for it," he told her when he gave her the papers. "Actually, you and Barbara Baily are the only two from our school who would stand much chance in the competition. Members of all the high-school choral groups in the city are eligible, so there will be some stiff opponents."

Martha hesitated, fingering the application. "Do you think I stand any chance at all?"

Mr. Shelby nodded slowly. "I probably shouldn't raise your hopes too high, Martha, but I think you do. Your transcript grades are excellent and your record in this school over the past year is something to be truly proud of. Go ahead and make out your application, and I will add my own recommendation to it and submit it for you."

To Martha, the form itself presented one difficult problem. It was the space headed "Date of Birth."

"Do you mean you don't know your own birthday?" Barbara asked in amazement. Having advised Martha of the competition in the first place, she seemed now to consider herself self-appointed supervisor of the form's proper completion. "Don't you know when you were born?"

"Not exactly," Martha answered thoughtfully. "It was in the fall. Mother has mentioned that. Up in the mountains the aspen were just beginning to turn."

"But don't you have a birth certificate? Didn't the doctor sign it?" Barbara was horrified. "There are rules about things like that."

"There are if you are born in a hospital, but the witch doctor doesn't keep records." Martha frowned in concentration as she tried to recall what had been told her concerning her birth. "My grandfather was living then, and he stuck a stirring stick into the ceiling as a marker of my birth place. There are many sticks there now, for my brother and sisters were born there also, and three of my cousins."

The space headed "Date of Birth" stared up at her emptily.

"You'll just have to pick a birthday, then," said Barbara. "You can't leave it blank. You might be disqualified."

"I came to Albuquerque in September." The sensations of that day came rushing back to Martha with a dreamlike quality, as though she were remembering something that had happened a million years ago—the heat of the sun, the cool dark hallway, the sight of Mrs. Boynton rising from the sofa in the elegant living room. That had been the day on which a girl named Natachu had become Martha Weekoty.



Bending over the form, she wrote "September 1st" and, counting back seventeen, filled in the year date. The rest of the questions gave her no problems.

April, in Albuquerque, brought the dust storms. Martha was used to these from the mesa, but somehow she had never expected them to take place in the city. It seemed to her sometimes as though some huge, untamed power had burst from restraints and hurled itself into a civilized modern setting where it did not belong.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the wind would rise to unbelievable strength, sweeping across the dry earth and whipping great clouds of dust before it. The sky would take on a pinkish cast, and the mountains in the distance would dim to nothing. Huge tumbleweeds would whirl through the streets, startling motorists and causing them to swerve in panic. There were many highway accidents during the dust storms, and Mr. Boynton would drive the children to school in the mornings, slowly and carefully, with windows raised high against the stinging winds.

In the afternoons, it was often Chuck Armstrong who drove Laurie and Martha home to the Boyntons', stopping on the way to pick up Teddy at his nursery school. After a few weeks of determinedly dating other girls, Chuck had returned to his devotion to Laurie. The situation was on a different basis now, however. She would date him only on weekend nights, and then only if she had been able to get in a few hours of study during the afternoons.

"You know," she remarked one evening, "I should have been doing this all along. It's not only bringing my grades up out of the basement, but the effect it has on Chuck is terrific."

"How do you mean?" Martha asked with interest. The two girls were in Laurie's room, studying. Mr. and Mrs. Boynton had gone out for the evening, and the boys were long since in bed. It was a good time for confidences.

"I didn't realize it at the time," Laurie said, "but I was defeating my own purpose. I was so overboard for Chuck that every time he whistled, I came running. I was too available. Aside from what it was doing to my grades, it just wasn't good politics."

"And now it is different?" Martha restrained a smile. Laurie, even in her new, studious role, was still inexplicably Laurie.

"Oh, but definitely! Now he isn't sure of me at all. I tell him I can't see him because I'm studying, but how does he know that this is really the reason? It could be that I am getting tired of him. Or even worse, that I am seeing someone else. When Chuck does get a date with me, he feels as though he has really accomplished something. He just wears himself out trying to see to it that I have a lovely time."

Martha shook her head in grudging admiration. "You certainly know how to handle people."

"It's a talent," Laurie said candidly. "Like your music. It doesn't work with everybody, though. Take Miss Raye and Mr. Giffen, for instance. And Alan. He doesn't like me at all, does he?"

"He used to," Martha told her, "until that night when you told him you were going to the library, and he found out that you really weren't. Alan can't stand dishonesty."

"How funny that it should make such a difference to him!" Laurie explained in surprise. "Most boys expect girls



to be a *little* deceitful. That's what makes them intriguing."

"Alan doesn't." Martha could not conceal the note of pride in her voice. "Alan is so sincere himself, he expects everybody else to be the same."

"You're in love with him," Laurie said. It was a statement, not a question.

"He is a good friend."

"He's more than that, and you know it." Laurie regarded her companion with curiosity. "You don't want to talk about it, do you?"

"No," Martha told her. Her feelings about Alan were too new and too deep for her to be able to discuss them; and if she *had* wished to, it would not have been with Laurie. Sometimes she wished there *were* someone she could confide in, someone to whom she could pour out all the strange and conflicting emotions which were so much greater than any she had ever felt before.

The night of the opera had been the beginning of the change in their relationship. It was as though, with a touch and a kiss, the friendship which had grown to be such an important part of both their lives had taken on a depth which was both wonderful and disturbing.

It had come into words one Saturday night when they were walking home from Barbara's, full of Coke and potato chips and relaxed with talk and music. Martha had been talking, continuing a conversation they had started at the party, when Alan stopped her. He reached over and took her hand and turned her to face him. In the moonlight, his eyes were dark and deep, and he was not smiling. His face was quiet and strong, and there was something in the set of it that was no longer boyish, that was a prom-

ise and a foreglance of the man's face that it would someday be.

"Martha," he said slowly, "do you know—do you have any idea—how much you mean to me?"

Martha met his gaze with her own. For an instant, she wished that she were Laurie, that she could smile and come out with exactly the right words said in the right way. But these were things she did not know, and so she merely nodded.

So this is how it is, she thought wonderingly. This is how it can be. And to think that I once imagined that I loved Matcitol!

After a moment, Alan began to speak. "It's funny how all your life you know that someday you're going to meet the right girl. There's an empty space inside you waiting for her. You think you know what she is going to be like; and then you meet her—and she turns out to be so different, so much more wonderful than you ever thought possible—"

"Alan," Martha broke in softly, "don't. Don't say too much. It's not as though it could work."

"Why couldn't it? Why couldn't it work? There have been plenty of marriages built on less than we have."

"We couldn't. It's not possible—"

"Why isn't it? What's the matter, Martha—are you prejudiced against me because I'm not an Indian?"

She raised her face and saw that he was smiling. Despite herself, a flicker of hope stirred within her.

"Your mother has such hopes for you. Your father wanted so much for you to be a doctor like he was. He





put money aside in a trust fund just so you could go to medical school. You can't disappoint them!"

"Of course not," Alan told her. "I wouldn't think of it. Being a doctor is my whole life. But is there any reason why I can't become one and marry you too?"

"You really mean it?" Martha stared at him. "You really think that, after eight years away from me—four of college and four of medical school—you will come back and still want me?"

"What do you mean, eight years away!" exclaimed Alan. "I couldn't last away from you eight years. We could get married this summer."

The words were clear enough, but for a moment she could not grasp them. "This summer! But in the fall you'll be going away to Stanford—"

"And you could come with me. Mr. Shelby thinks you're a certainty for the Nightingale Scholarship. That's not for any specific school, Martha—you could take the money and study anywhere! It's not going to cost us any more to live together and go to school than to do it living apart. Lots of college students are married. There are plenty of music schools out on the coast—good ones, too!" His voice was shaking with emotion. "I love you, Martha."

"I love you too." She had never said the words before. She tried them again, softly. "I love you."

"Then, you'll say 'yes'?" Alan asked her eagerly. "At least, you'll think about it?"

"I will think about it," Martha told him.

She had thought about it almost every waking moment since. It would have been good to talk about it to someone, but that someone could not be Laurie. Pleased as

she was over their newly achieved friendship, Martha realized, in a quiet, rational corner of her mind, that this friendship might never have materialized at all if Laurie had not needed something. For all her charm, the girl was by nature too self-centered to be someone in whom to confide problems.

Now, as Laurie seemed about to pursue the subject with another question, there was a shuffle of slippered feet in the doorway. Both girls turned quickly to find Daniel standing there. His hair was tousled from his pillow, and he gazed out blearily into a world which was usually held in focus by his glasses.

"Isn't Mother coming home soon?" he asked wearily.

"Dan Boynton, you should have been asleep hours ago!" exclaimed Laurie. "What are you doing still awake?"

"Waiting for Mother. I have to ask her something."

Laurie frowned. "Can't it keep till tomorrow? Mother and Daddy are at a party. They probably won't be home for hours."

"No, it can't wait. I have to know by tomorrow." Dan's eyes filled with tears. "I was supposed to know by last week even."

"What is it, Danny?" Martha got up and went over to him. "Can I help you with something?"

"It's the All American pageant," the boy said desperately. "Our school is giving it. Everybody in my class has to talk about something, some different part of America, and they have to dress up for it and everything. Mark Mills is going to be a farmer. Louise Zander is going to be a fisherlady up in Maine and tell how they pull lobsters out of cages in the water."



"Why do you need to ask Mother about it?" Laurie asked him. "Why can't you look things up in your social studies book?"

"Because that's not the way you're supposed to do it!" Dan insisted. "The whole thing is, it's not supposed to come out of the book. You're supposed to ask your parents. They're supposed to tell you something different that the other kids won't already know. Mark's mother grew up on a farm and knows all about farming. Louise's dad *lived* in Maine and when he was a little boy, he used to catch lobsters himself!"

Laurie sighed. "Why didn't you ask Mother sooner? Why did you wait until a time like tonight and then try to stay awake for her? Really, Danny, by the time Mother gets home, she's going to be too tired to go into something like that with you. And you'll be too sleepy to understand her if she does."

"I *did* ask her sooner," Dan said miserably. "I've asked her five times now. She's always busy and says to talk to her about it later. But I can't wait till later anymore, because I have to tell them at school tomorrow. I'm the only one who doesn't know what he's going to be yet, and tomorrow they make up the program!"

There was such distress in the boy's voice that Martha put her arms around him and hugged him. As she found herself doing so often lately, she forced down the rising surge of anger against the beautiful and harried woman who was too busy to be a mother.

"It's all right, Danny," she heard herself saying comfortingly. "We'll think of something for you to be."

He raised his face hopefully. "We will?"

"Of course." She glanced at Laurie, who shook her head blankly. "There must be something—some part of America—"

"I don't know anything about lobster fishing," Daniel said sadly. "Or farming. I bet you don't know either. All you know about is being an Indian."

"I'm afraid you're right," Martha agreed ruefully, and then she paused. "Why, that's an idea, Danny! You can be an Indian!"

"How?" Dan asked her. "I don't know much about them. All I know is you, and you're not *real*. I mean—" He hurriedly tried to take the rudeness from the statement. "You're like we are."

"You know a lot about Indians," Martha contradicted him. "You know all about the initiation into the Kachinas, how the children go down into the kiva and the God of Growing talks to them and the floggers come. I've told you so much, Danny, it shouldn't be hard at all for you to give that as your part of the program!"

"I could, couldn't I!" Daniel's face brightened. "Hey, that would be different from *anybody*!"

"Of course it would!" Martha said warmly. "And do you know what else I could do? I could teach you one of the dances, one of the ones the children do. And I could make you a headband with feathers in it. When you finished telling about the initiation, you could put it on, to show the audience how a child finally gets to wear his feathers!"

"That's keen!" Daniel actually looked happy now. "Say, that'll really be O.K.!"

"It sounds wonderful," Laurie agreed.



Martha took the boy's hand. "Come on, now, Dan, back to bed with you. It's late, and you'll need to be bright-eyed in the morning when you tell your teacher about your part in the program."

She led the child off to bed and tucked him in under the blankets. When she returned to Laurie's room, the other girl was waiting for her. On her face was a look of sincere admiration.

"You certainly know how to handle children. You're marvelous with Danny. He's surely attached to you—like you were a combination friend-sister-mother."

Martha knew that the words were meant to be complimentary, but she was not pleased by them. "I'm not his sister," she said shortly, "and I'm certainly not his mother."

Laurie was disconcerted. For one of very few times in her life, she had failed to come out with the proper remark. She hesitated, trying to ascertain where it was that she had offended.

Finally she said, "I only meant that you are a wonderful friend to him. He couldn't get along without you."

"He should be able to," Martha told her. "He has a family."

After this, Laurie did not say anything at all.



THE END of April was a two-heart season again.

The air softened and the days grew slowly warmer, and dandelions poked their heads through the brown winter grass. Tulips and jonquils burst into bloom in gardens up and down the street, and the bare branches of the aspens began to break out in clusters of tiny leaves.

The nights, however, remained cold. Often Martha would get up two or three times to cover the boys, for Daniel especially, thrashing about during one of his frequent dreams, tossed the blankets off onto the floor and lay there shivering, with no protection against the night chill.

His dreams disturbed Martha more than they did Daniel himself. It seemed unnatural and almost frightening to see a small boy mumbling and sobbing in his sleep, with no recollection in the morning of what the nightmares had been or even that there had been nightmares at all.

Once, when Martha stooped to cover him, he sat up and



threw his arms around her neck and said in a loud voice, "I want to go home!"

"Danny," Martha said gently, "Danny, you *are* home." She put her arms around him and held him, rocking him back and forth until she felt his body relax a little, and then she lowered him to his pillow. "You are home," she told him again. "You were dreaming."

In the morning, he did not remember the incident at all.

When Martha told his mother about it, Mrs. Boynton did not seem too concerned. "He was probably just restless. Maybe he ate too much supper."

"He ate very little supper," Martha told her. "Teddy eats twice as much as Daniel, always."

"Then, perhaps it's excitement over his school pageant." Mrs. Boynton smiled understandingly. "What is it he is supposed to do in it? Give some skit about being an Indian?"

"It's an All American pageant," Martha told her. "Each child is supposed to take one special part of America and talk about it. I'm making Dan an Indian headdress to wear when he does his part."

She smiled at the memory of Teddy's envious gasp—"You mean Dan is going to get to wear feathers, even when real Indians don't!"

"He'll calm down," Mrs. Boynton predicted, "after this production is over. Why don't you try giving him warm milk before you put him to bed tonight?"

"I think it might be good," said Martha hesitantly, "if it were you who tucked him in at night. I could get him all ready for bed, and then you could just come up and settle him."

"Of course," Mrs. Boynton agreed immediately. "I haven't been doing that often lately, have I? There just seem to be so many things coming up in the evenings, and you handle everything so well."

That night, and for several nights after, she came up every evening to hug the boys and settle them for sleeping. It seemed, however, that it was always Teddy with his heart-warming request for "one more hug" and "just one more good night" who received the larger share of time and attention. Then the Civic Club began making plans for its annual Spring Formal, a money-raising social event, and Mrs. Boynton, as chairman of the floor show committee, was required to attend the evening meetings. Since she left the house immediately after dinner, it left Martha to go back to the nighttime routine of putting the boys to bed. Mr. Boynton would, on these occasions, ascend the stairs himself, to stand in the boys' doorway and bid them a brief "Good night," but he was not a demonstrative man by nature, and rather than an affectionate interlude, this ritual was more of a formal farewell for the evening.

One night Martha was awakened by a shriek from the next room. When she rushed in, it was to find Daniel sitting upright in his bed. He seemed to be more asleep than awake, but when she sat down beside him, he clutched at her convulsively.

"There, there, Danny. It's all right." She soothed him, as she had grown used to doing. "You've been dreaming again, haven't you? Do you remember what it was about?"

To her surprise, he did.

"I was up on the stage at school," Daniel told her



shakily, "telling my Indian story, and I looked out, and there were all these people. I never saw any of them before, Martha. They were strangers, and I looked and looked, and there wasn't anybody I knew. I looked at the other kids, and I didn't know them either. I didn't know the teachers; I didn't know anybody!" He started to sob. "When I got through my story, nobody clapped. Nobody had wanted to hear it."

Martha patted the shaking shoulders. "That was a silly dream, Danny, because there won't be just strangers. Your whole family will be there, and they'll clap and clap. They will be so proud of you!"

"No, they won't," Daniel contradicted her. "Mother told me this afternoon. The Civic Club Dance is that night. She has to be there—to make the floor show work—or something."

"She does?" Martha fought to keep her own resentment from showing in her voice. "The floor show can't possibly be as important as your program!"

"Mother says she has to."

"Well, maybe she does." Martha hugged him tightly. "I'm sure, though, that she would rather come hear you. She probably feels terrible about having to miss it."

"There won't be anyone there." Dan sobbed. "Like in the dream—all the people—won't know me!"

"I'll be there!" Martha declared vehemently.

"You will?"

"I wouldn't miss it for anything. I'll take Teddy with me. And Laurie—she'll come with us. And Alan. And—and—" She sought desperately for someone else to add to the assembly. "Maybe Laurie's friend Chuck. Why, Danny,

you'll have more people there than anybody else! Wait until you hear all the applause you get!"

She sat with him for a long time, holding him close and rocking him. She returned to her own room only after he was asleep.

During the first week in May, both Martha and Barbara Baily were informed that their applications for the Nightingale Scholarship had been accepted, and they, along with six other applicants from Albuquerque public schools, would audition at the Spring Fiesta in Old Town. The notice was accompanied by a list of the Nightingale members who would be acting as judges. This Alan studied with great interest.

"Mrs. Robert Kirkland," he read musingly. "I didn't know she was a Nightingale. She and her husband used to be two of my father's patients." He paused. "Say, Martha, what are you planning to sing for this audition?"

"We all have to sing the same two pieces, ones that we have done with the choruses," Martha told him. "The third piece we select for ourselves. I thought maybe I would sing 'My Hero.'"

Alan shook his head. "Too ordinary. Everybody sings 'My Hero.' I'll bet four of those seven other girls will be doing it, including Barbara."

"I hadn't thought of that. What do you suggest then?" Martha regarded him with curiosity.

"I think you ought to wear that fiesta dress that Danny's always talking about and sing one of the Indian ballads—maybe the 'Cactus and the Coyote' thing."

"Oh, Alan!" Martha was stunned. "You can't mean that!"



Why, the 'Cactus and the Coyote' isn't even a real song!"

"Of course it's a real song. It's a darned good song. The others are too." Alan thumbed through the thick notebook on his lap. "We've really gathered quite a collection of them here."

"We should have," Martha said practically. "We have been working on them long enough. Still, they are not the sort of thing one sings to compete for a music scholarship."

"Not ordinarily, maybe," said Alan, "but with Mrs. Kirkland as one of the judges—"

"Why should that make a difference?" Martha asked him.

"Mr. Kirkland is an editor at the University Press. They publish all kinds of books with western backgrounds. Mr. and Mrs. Kirkland both have a great interest in Indian culture. I remember my father once commenting to my mother about it."

"But for the competition!" exclaimed Martha. "It just wouldn't be the right thing. Nobody else would be singing folk ballads."

"Of course not. That's why it would be so effective. It would be different!"

"Too different," said Martha decidedly. "Maybe you're right about 'My Hero,' but I'm sure we can find something more appropriate than an Indian ballad. Just because you are interested in that sort of thing doesn't mean that everyone else is."

"The Kirklands are," insisted Alan. He paused, and then suddenly he grinned at her. "Out of all the girls in the world, why did I have to pick such a stubborn one!" His

voice was warm, though, and the way he spoke the words, they were almost a compliment.

"I don't know," Martha replied softly, "but I'm glad you did."

Smiling across at him, she wondered silently how she had ever existed before she met Alan. He was as much a part of her life now as though he had always been there. They studied and talked and went to parties together. They sang together, passing the guitar back and forth between them as they took turns on accompaniment. During afternoons and weekends, they had been collaborating on the steadily growing book of Indian ballads, with Martha translating the legends into English and Alan helping her to set the music down on paper, until now the notebook was almost filled.

The Boyntons did not seek to interfere in the relationship. However, Martha could sense their increasing concern.

"Martha," Mrs. Boynton asked one day, "have you ever met Mrs. Wallace?"

"Why, no." Martha was surprised at the question. "No, I haven't."

"Alan spends so much of his time here." Mrs. Boynton hesitated, as though trying to express something that she did not want to put into words. "I just wondered if he had ever taken you to *his* home."

"No," said Martha again. This was something about which she had sometimes wondered, and hearing it spoken brought the question suddenly into a sharper position in her mind. Several times during the next few days she came close to asking Alan about it. The words formed on



her lips, but, just as she was ready to speak them, something stopped her.

One evening she did manage to bring up the subject.

"Alan—" Even to her own ears, there was a strained note to her voice. "Do you realize that I have never met your mother?"

"No." He met her eyes directly. "I have never met yours either."

The counterstatement was so unexpected that it threw her off balance. At once there flashed through her mind the scene that would occur if she arrived at the pueblo with Alan in tow. The village children would swarm about them, just as they had when Mr. Boynton had brought her home for Christmas. Her father and mother—her aunt and uncle—she could visualize their shocked amazement. "See Natachu!" they would whisper to each other. "May the gods preserve us—she has brought us home a Bahana!" And *Grandmother!* She cringed before the thought of Grandmother's reaction.

Alan was regarding her seriously, and as she gazed into the open, freckled face, she knew that he would answer her honestly.

"Alan," she asked softly, "have you even told her about me?"

"She knows I have a girl," Alan answered, "and that I care very much about her. She doesn't know how—serious—it has become. She thinks that when I go away to school the—romance—will be finished."

"Does she know that I am Indian?" Martha asked him.

"Yes."

"And she disapproves of this?" Martha answered her

own question. "Yes, of course, she does. That is why you have not introduced me."

"I haven't introduced you," Alan said with his usual honesty, "because I wanted Mother to have a chance to grow more used to the idea of you before she met you. It's not that she is—narrow, exactly, it's just that I am her only child, and since my father died, she has felt very responsible for me. My going through medical school and becoming a doctor, as my father wanted, is extremely important to her. She has lived most of her life as a professional man's wife. She has always taken it for granted that, when I married, it would be someone very much like her."

"You have not told her that you want to marry me this summer? That you want me to come to California with you?"

"No, I had thought I would wait until Graduation to tell her that. It seemed like a good time." He stopped, seeing the look on Martha's face. "Martha, have I hurt you? You must know I didn't mean to. I thought I was working things out in a way that would be easier for everyone. I love you, and I love my mother. I am going to live my own life, as I think best, even if my mother disagrees with me. But I wanted her to be able to adjust to one fact at a time, before having the whole thing handed to her."

"You are ashamed of me," Martha said quietly.

The words hung in the air between them. Alan stiffened. His face seemed to grow pale and tight beneath the freckles.

"That is not true," he said in a flat voice.



Now it was Martha's turn to apologize. "I'm sorry. I know it's not true. It is the same with you, as it would be with me—with my taking you back to meet *my* parents. Oh, Alan—"

He came to her then, and put his arms around her. "Come home with me tonight for dinner," he suggested. "You can meet Mother. We'll tell her our plans. We'll clear the air and get everything said that needs saying."

"No!" Now that it was actually suggested, the whole idea left her weak with unexplainable panic. "No—not tonight! Not yet! You were right—we should wait until after Graduation."

"Not if you're going to think that it's because I'm *ashamed*—"

"I don't think that. I really don't. I don't know what made me say it." She leaned her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes, feeling the warmth of his arms about her. "I love you, Alan." The words came out with a little choking sound.

"I love you too," Alan said quietly, "so it will be all right. Everything will work out all right."

The telephone call came the last Friday in May.

Martha had just returned from choral practice. The high school chorus was to sing at the Graduation exercises, and Mr. Shelby was rehearsing them in their numbers. To Martha and Barbara Baily, the coming performance was overshadowed by the approaching weekend, on which Old Town would be celebrating its Spring Fiesta. The competition for the Nightingale Scholarship was scheduled for two o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

Daniel's "All American" program was also scheduled for that weekend, on Friday evening. The boy was standing, in full headdress, in front of the living room mirror rehearsing his speech for what seemed the hundredth time. The sound of the telephone cut through his monologue, causing him to stumble over the words which he had memorized so carefully.

"Oh, heck!" he murmured irritably. "Now I'll have to start all over."

Teddy, who was never allowed to answer the telephone, scrambled hurriedly to reach it. "I'll get it!" he shouted triumphantly. A moment later, his voice rose importantly. "Martha, it's for you!"

"For me?" She was surprised. She had assumed the call was Chuck Armstrong, asking for Laurie. "Who is it, Teddy—Alan?"

"No, it's a lady. An operator lady." He relinquished the receiver with regret. "She asked for Miss Martha Weekoty."

"Hello?" Martha spoke into the mouthpiece. Immediately she realized that the call was long-distance. "This is Martha Weekoty."

"Go ahead, sir," the operator said crisply, "Your party is on the line." And then, clear and unmistakable across the miles, Martha heard Leeka's voice.

"Leeka!" Cold fear closed suddenly over her. "Where are you? What is it? Has something happened?"

"I'm calling from the Trader's." He sounded as he always had, steady and dependable. "I just came up from Gallup. I was going to pick up Maria and take her back with me to hunt for an apartment. When I reached the



pueblo, I found the Old One sick. My sisters say that she has been so for many days now."

"How bad is it?" Martha tightened her grip upon the receiver. "Have you called for a doctor?"

"She will not let me. She wants no one with her except the family. Your mother has been doing everything. She looks exhausted." There was a heavy note to his voice. "You had better come home, Natachu."

"But a doctor—surely if we send for one from Gallup—"

"The time for that is past," Leeka told her quietly. "It would serve no purpose now except to upset her. You are needed here, Daughter-of-my-sister. Will you come home?"

"Yes," Martha answered. "Yes, of course I will."

She replaced the receiver on the hook and opened the telephone directory to look up Mr. Boynton's office number.



IT WAS DARK when Mr. Boynton and Martha reached the pueblo. The stars were high and very clear through the spring night. Despite his protests, Martha insisted that Mr. Boynton drop her at the plaza as he had before, and she went alone through the shadowy streets to her home.

It was late enough so that the children were sleeping and the house was very still. Her father and Leeka and her aunt's husband were seated in the front room. They glanced up without surprise when she entered, and she knew that they had been waiting for her arrival.

"Good!" Leeka said quietly. "You are in time."

"Where is she?" In the stillness, her own voice sounded offensively loud to Martha.

Her father nodded toward the door to the nearest bedroom. "Your mother is with her. Your aunt also. They have asked that the men not enter."

"Even Leeka?" If her grandmother could have been



said to love anyone dearly, it was this youngest and favorite son.

"She does not recognize me," Leeka said. "She is back in a time before my birth."

"She will not know me either then," said Martha.

The tiny sleeping room was close and crowded. The window was tightly shut, and the air was stale and musty. As Martha stood in the doorway, the sour stench of sickness rose to meet her and, for a moment, she was not certain that she could force herself to enter.

Then she looked past the figure of her aunt and saw her mother, crouched on the floor by the far side of the bed. Her face was lined with weariness, and her eyes, when she met those of her daughter, held a look of relief.

"You came," she said.

"Of course." Without further hesitation, Martha crossed the room and dropped to her knees beside her mother. "Is there anything that I can do?"

"Speak to her," her mother said softly. "Tell her that you are here. Perhaps she will understand you. Other than that, there is nothing that any of us can do but wait."

Bracing herself, Martha leaned forward and gazed down at the figure on the bed. Her grandmother seemed very small, lying there amid the blankets. Her long black hair was spread about her, and her sightless eyes stared unblinkingly upward through the cloudy film that covered them. For an instant, Martha was certain that life had already passed from her.

"Grandmother," she said, "it is I—Martha."

The sound of her voice seemed to reach the old woman, although the words themselves did not. She stirred

slightly, letting her head fall to one side, as though to hear more clearly. Her lips moved to form a name.

"It is Natachu." Martha spoke again, in her own language this time, and suddenly, she *was* Natachu. The years flew backward, and she was a child again, singing at her play, and her grandmother with a laugh, was bending to hug her.

"You are like a little bird," she was saying, "peeping in your nest! You will be a singer someday, my dear little cheepling!" Her eyes had been clear then, and her arms strong, and there had been pride in her voice. "You will sing for our dancers in the summer! You will sing before our fires in the winter! You will take the songs of our people and pass them downward to your children and their children! Our ancestors will glory in their heaven, because through you they are not forgotten!"

The figure on the bed stirred again, and the cracked lips moved.

"What is it, Grandmother?" Natachu leaned closer, trying to decipher the mumbled syllables. "For whom are you asking? Is it Leeka?"

It was her aunt who answered her. "Her mind is back in a time before Leeka—before any of us. She is calling for her mother."

For a long time after that, there was no sound in the room but the old woman's heavy breathing. Finally, it was Natachu's mother who began to speak, slowly and dreamily.

"Your grandmother was not always as she is now, my daughter. There was a time when she was young. I remember from my childhood how beautiful she was, how high



she held her head and how the others turned to watch her as she walked through the streets of the village. I remember my father with pride on his face.

"I remember the winters of hunger when the storage rooms were empty and we children wept for food. Your grandmother knelt on the floor of the front room and made clay bowls and baked them over a dung kiln. She painted designs upon them with yucca leaf brushes and carried them on horseback into the town of Gallup, where she traded them for corn meal and hominy.

"I remember the nights when there was no wood for the fire, and we slept together under one blanket. I remember the warmth of her and the strength, the wisdom of her and the joy. She was not always as now."

She finished with a little gasp, as though pain had thrust through her, and Natachu regarded her with alarm. "Mother, are you all right?"

"It was nothing. Only a cramp from kneeling."

"Come, sit," Natachu urged her. "I will get you a chair."

"I will stay here," said her mother decidedly.

The long hours of the night passed slowly. It was just before dawn that the woman on the bed moved. Turning her head toward the window, she said clearly, "The sky grows light."

"Mother!" Natachu breathed in an awed whisper.

"Mother, her eyes have cleared! She can *see*!"

"It is not with her eyes that she sees," her mother said softly.

"It grows bright," declared the old woman. "So bright. I had forgotten how bright the morning sky could be!" She closed her eyes and lay back among the blankets, and

the first rays of sunlight slanted through the dusty window and fell across her face.

"Grandmother!" Natachu cried hoarsely, but her mother had already risen and was awkwardly dragging her body to a standing position beside the bed.

"It is over," she said simply. She bent down and straightened the blankets, using her left hand, the hand which was on the heart side of the body—and of the spirit rather than of the earth. Natachu's aunt was weeping.

Lifting her eyes from the empty shell on the bed, Natachu gazed out through the window into the soft flush of dawn. She could imagine her grandmother's spirit blowing across the mesa, light and joyful in the fresh winds of morning. She could see it poised on the cliff's edge, mingling with the mists that rose from the valley, spinning and whirling in an ecstasy of freedom, higher and higher into eternal brilliance.

"Be happy!" she cried silently. "Please, Grandmother, be happy! And forgive me—forgive me—that I did not even try to understand!"

For a moment she remained thus, staring out into the morning. Then she dropped her eyes and, burying her face in her hands, she wept for all the love she had not given, which now—too late—she discovered in her heart.





IT WAS MIDDAY when a boy from the Trader's brought the message that Martha was to telephone the Boyntons. Leeka drove her down to the Trading Post in his pickup truck, and she telephoned from there.

Mr. Boynton did not waste time in preliminaries. "Martha," he said as soon as he heard her voice, "we can't find Dan."

"You can't find him!" Martha repeated the words stupidly. "But, why can't you? I mean—where has he gone?"

"He has disappeared." There was a tightness to Mr. Boynton's voice, as though he were using all his effort to hold it under control. "When I got back last night from taking you to the pueblo, he had vanished."

"But, he was at home when we left. He was practicing for his program." Martha paused. "He missed the program then!" It was a silly thing to say, but, at the moment, it was easier to think of insignificant things than great ones. "He was so excited about being in that program!"

"Nobody has seen him since yesterday afternoon," Mr. Boynton told her.

There was a moment's silence. Then Martha asked, "Are the police looking for him?" Her mind seemed to have settled into a kind of numbness. The emotional stress of the past day had done nothing to prepare her for this added nightmare.

"His description is out all over the state. Rangers are searching along the foot of the Sandias, in case he might have decided to go mountain climbing. Luckily, with the lack of rain lately, we don't have to think about dragging the arroyos. The thing we're most worried about—" the rigid control broke for a second and his voice lurched strangely—"it seems more than possible that he may have been kidnapped."

"Kidnapped!" The possibility of such a thing had not as yet flashed through her mind. "Wouldn't you have received a note?"

"There is still time for that. They might be waiting to deliver it until we are in a state of frenzy, willing to hand over the money without an instant's delay. The reason I called you—I hated to do it, when I know you're involved with your own family crises—but you've been at home with the boys so much more than we have. I had to ask you—have you noticed anyone hanging around the place lately? Any stranger who might have stopped to talk to Daniel when he was out in the yard playing? Any *possible* suspect?"

"No," Martha told him. She paused and then added, hesitantly, "Have you thought—has it occurred to you—that he might have—run away?"



"Run away!" Mr. Boynton sounded incredulous. "Daniel? Impossible! What reason would he have for doing such a thing?"

"He mentioned it once," said Martha.

"Dan said he was going to run away? He actually told you that?" There was the sound of a muffled voice in the background, and Mr. Boynton spoke in an aside to someone in the room with him. "No, she doesn't *know* anything. She says he did mention it. Oh, all right—here—"

An instant later, Mrs. Boynton spoke into the receiver. "What was it Dan said, Martha? Tell me!"

"It wasn't anything definite." Martha strained to remember. "He was worried that maybe he had been adopted. He kept talking about how he was going to go someday to look for his real parents. I didn't think he meant anything by it. He gets like that sometimes, you know—all upset and nervous."

"No." Mrs. Boynton's voice was trembling. "No, I didn't know. Although, looking back on it, I suppose—there were times when he seemed to want more attention. I thought he was just being difficult. He was so different from the other two." She paused, and when she spoke again, it was very quietly. "Martha, was Danny unhappy?"

"He cried a lot at night," Martha told her. "He had dreams."

"About being adopted?" Mrs. Boynton asked. "Did he ever give you any reason for his feeling that way?"

Martha spoke gently, trying not to hurt her. Suddenly, she was very sorry for this mother who was discovering, perhaps too late, that she really did not know her child at all. "He said that he didn't look like anybody in the

family. Laurie and Teddy are so attractive. He thought that you cared more for them than for him."

"But how could he ever think such a thing? Danny is our son!" Mrs. Boynton was crying now. She tried to speak again, but the words were lost in sobs, and, a moment later, Mr. Boynton took over the telephone.

"The crazy kid! Adopted, indeed! Why, he looks just the way I did at his age, glasses and all. And if we *had* adopted him, it would have been because we loved and wanted him. Didn't he ever consider that aspect of it?"

"I don't think he really considered anything," answered Martha. "Danny always makes things as hard for himself as possible. Teddy expects everybody to love him, but you have to keep *proving* it to Daniel."

"Crazy kid!" Mr. Boynton muttered once more. He drew a breath and, when he spoke again, it was in a slightly more controlled voice. "Thank you for telling us all this, Martha. It is a possibility that had not occurred to us. I'll talk to the police about extending the search to other places—movie houses and—and amusement parks—and the sort of places boys go when they run away." He paused. "Forgive me. I have been so wrapped up in my own worries, I never asked about your grandmother. How is she?"

"She died this morning," Martha told him quietly.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I really am, Martha. Is there anything we can do?"

"No," Martha told him. "There is nothing—except for me to be here for a while. My mother needs me. I wish there were something *I* could do—about Daniel. I have come to feel about him as though he were my own brother."



"I know you have." For an instant it was as though the two of them, the man and the girl, had reached across the miles, the years, the differences which lay between them, with a touch which wrenched each of their hearts. Then, as suddenly, they were apart again, joined only by a thin wire, each helpless in a separate world of heartache.

"Is it all right," Martha asked timidly, "if I phone you tomorrow? I don't want to bother you, but I will be worrying."

"Of course. Call us in the morning. Meanwhile, if there is any news, any definite news, I'll telephone the Trading Post and have the message delivered to you."

When Martha left the telephone booth, Leeka was waiting for her in the pickup. At the sight of her face, he frowned in apprehension. "Was it bad news?"

"I'm afraid so." Martha opened the truck door and climbed up into the seat beside him. "Daniel Boynton has disappeared. He has been missing since yesterday evening."

"Do they have the police looking for him?" Then Leeka answered his own question. "Yes, of course, they must have. Well, they'll find him. Kids are always wandering off, you know. When I was a boy, I was lost in the mountains for a whole week."

He meant the words to be comforting. He had been lost for a week and survived. He had slept out under the stars. He had eaten roots and berries and had even killed a rabbit and eaten part of it raw. Martha had heard the story before, and she knew it was true. However, the boy Leeka had been an entirely different person from the boy Danny.

There is nothing I can do about it. Everything is being done that can be. With a violent effort, she turned the conversation to another subject.

"This was the weekend you were going to take Maria apartment hunting. What a sad thing this occasion has turned into! The two of you have hardly had a minute to see each other."

"We will go next weekend instead." There was an unaccustomed note of tenderness in Leeka's voice. "Maria has waited many months for me. She will wait another week." He paused, then asked unexpectedly, "What has happened with you and Matcito? Did you have an argument when you were home for Christmastime? From what Maria tells me, he is spending much of his time with your friend Duvangyamsi."

"He is?" Martha knew that the flash of resentment that followed his words was entirely unreasonable. As quickly as it had come, it vanished. "It is just as well. Matcito and I have nothing more to give each other. We have grown so far apart."

Leeka glanced at her sideways. "What about the Bahana boy of whom you told me? Are you still seeing him?"

Martha nodded. "I see him—often."

"He has become important to you? More than important?" He nodded without waiting for an answer. "I see he has. I am sorry."

Martha's eyes widened with surprise. "You are sorry! Oh, Leeka! Of all of the family, you were the one I counted on to approve and understand!"

"I do understand. I know, however, that it is not a good thing. The mixing of blood leads to many problems. I be-



lieve that there must be a common background to make for a good marriage."

"Alan and I have much in common!" exclaimed Martha. "We share many of the same interests! We are so much the same sort of people beneath our skins!"

"He is not of our blood or of our upbringing. His responsibilities are not to our people. These are differences which overshadow all samenesses." He did not look at her. His eyes were focused on the road ahead. "You speak of the beings beneath your skins; but how many people will see those beings? It is a sad thing, Natachu, but it is true—the people in the world will see you and judge you with their eyes alone. His people and your people also. It is the way the world is."

"But it shouldn't be!" exclaimed Martha. "Love is not a matter of blood!"

"There is more to marriage than love," Leeka said quietly. "Your Bahana boy—what is it that he plans to do for a living?"

"He is going to be a doctor," Martha responded proudly.

"Daughter-of-my-sister, have you thought of the problems it would make for a doctor in this part of the country to have an Indian wife?"

The question was still there in the air between them when Leeka drove the pickup truck into the yard beside their house.

Martha's aunt met them at the door. Her face was still swollen from her earlier weeping, but now there was something else there also—a look of worry.

"Natachu," she said, "I am afraid that your mother is not well."

"My mother?" Martha was startled. Immediately, there sprang to her mind the moment at her grandmother's bedside when her mother's "cramp" had struck her. She had discounted it then as being of no importance. Now the memory filled her with sudden apprehension.

"Where is my mother?" she asked.

"She is in bed, resting. I have tried to make her comfortable. In her condition, these last days of work and worry over your grandmother have been very difficult for her."

"I know they have. Perhaps she is only tired," Martha said hopefully. "When she has rested a bit, she will feel better."

"I pray that you are right." By her aunt's expression, Martha knew that she did not believe this. When she herself entered the sleeping room and saw her mother lying there, she did not believe it either. In her mother's pain-filled eyes, she saw her deepest unspoken dread come true.

"The baby is coming." It was a statement rather than a question.

Her mother nodded. The strain and sorrow of the long night seemed to have drained her of all emotion. Her gentle, placid face was slack with exhaustion.

"But it is too soon!" Martha exclaimed unreasonably. It was as though, by making the statement, she hoped to alter the inevitability of the thing that was happening. "The baby is not due to be born until the beginning of the summer!"

Her mother nodded wearily. "Perhaps the Great Spirit



sends him early that his soul may replace that of his grandmother. These are things that sometimes happen."

"But it is too soon!" Martha regarded her mother helplessly. "Is there anything I can do?" Her heart ached already with the thought of what was to come.

"You could call on the medicine man," her mother suggested. "He might be able to call to the baby's spirit. He could ask it to wait a little longer before coming forth into the world."

"Oh, Mother!" Martha choked back the tears which rose within her. "Surely you can't believe—" She stopped her words. There was nothing to be gained by denying her mother this one bit of comfort. "All right, if that is what you want. I will go and get him."

Leeka was waiting for her when she left the sleeping room. His face was clouded with a fresh anxiety. "How is she? What is the matter?"

"Her baby is coming," Martha told him miserably. "It isn't due until summer. She has asked that I go and fetch the medicine man to speak to its spirit."

"The medicine man!" exclaimed Leeka. "What possible good can that do! A baby that comes this early—" He paused, figuring the months on his fingers. "When in the summer?"

"Early summer. At the time of the KoKochi Dance. At least, that is what Mother told me at Christmastime." She followed his thoughts, but shook her head sadly. "No—it is impossible. It will be too tiny to live."

"It might," Leeka said slowly. "With the right care—with oxygen—an incubator. It is certainly worth trying."

Cut out this medicine man bit; we've got to get your mother to a hospital."

"She'll never go," Martha told him hopelessly. "All of her babies have been born here at the pueblo."

"Two of them dead," Leeka reminded her dryly. His voice was thick with feeling. "Your grandmother is dead also."

"But she was an old woman! It was her time!" Martha stood before him irresolutely, torn down the center of her being. Half of her longed to follow his directions, to do what her common judgment told her was the only possible thing to assure a premature baby of a chance at survival. Her own mind had long since rejected the belief of the medicine man's magic. Yet the other half of her stood immobile, bound by something even stronger—the long years of acceptance and obedience to the commands and beliefs of her elders.

"She was an old woman," Leeka agreed quietly, "but I have known many old women who lived longer. With medical care, she might still be with us. A shot of penicillin a week ago might have been all she needed. A cataract operation, and she might not have lived her last years in darkness. I arrived here too late to do anything about your grandmother, but your mother—my sister—is another question. I want her to live, and her baby to live! I want both of them to have every chance possible!"

He put out his hand gently and touched Martha's shoulder. In his eyes, she saw her own feelings reflected, the torn, jagged edges of her own uncertain emotions. But Leeka was older than she, and had done more living. He had stepped ahead of her and found his answer.



"Your grandmother is dead, Natachu," he said softly, "and the world she lived in is dead also. It is up to us now—to you and me. We are a whole new generation."

For a moment Martha was silent. It was only for a moment. Then she said, "Get the pickup truck and bring it up to the doorway. By the time you come in for her, I will have my mother ready."



THE TRIP to the hospital was a nightmare. As Martha had anticipated, her mother flatly refused to go.

"This baby will be born here, beneath the family roof," she declared firmly. "He will be born here in the same room as his brother and sisters."

"The baby will be very tiny," Martha reminded her. "He will need all the help he can get just to stay alive. He must be born where he can be taken care of."

"Your aunt will care for him," her mother insisted. "She has done so before with the others."

"But the other babies did not come early. They waited until their proper birth times. This baby will need special care! He must be born where there are medicines and doctors!"

It was obvious that argument was useless. When Leeka came into the house, Martha nodded at her mother. "She will not go."

"Indeed, she will!" Suddenly, Leeka bent and scooped



his sister up into his strong arms. Without apparent effort, he carried her through the house and out to the waiting pickup truck.

Martha held the door for him and shooed back the children who surged out behind them. Then she leaped into the front seat with the other two and hastily shut the door. Her aunt, frozen with horror, stood in the doorway of their house.

Benjamin, with one terrified glance at his struggling mother, ran frantically across the yard to find his father. He returned with him, just as the pickup truck was rumbling through the gate.

"Come back!" Martha's father was a small man and a quiet one. She had never before seen such rage upon his face. "Come back!" he shouted. "Bring her back here! Leeka! Natachu! Do you want to kill her?"

"We must stop and explain to him!" cried Martha.

Instead of stopping, Leeka pressed his foot down hard upon the accelerator. "There isn't time for that. It would take hours to convince him. By then, it might be too late."

The truck leapt forward and roared down the narrow street, twisting and turning between the close-set houses. Children screamed and pointed, and a flock of chickens, which had been pecking in the road, went fluttering wildly in all directions.

Looking back through the rear window, Martha's last glimpse of her father was of his tortured face as he ran behind them, waving and shouting for them to come back.

In the seat beside her, her mother was too weary for further argument. She seemed content finally to lean back

with her eyes closed and leave her fate to the management of her brother and daughter.

"Everything will be all right," Martha said comfortingly, placing her own smooth hand on the callused ones which were clasped so tightly in her mother's lap. And in her heart she cried silently, "Please, please, let it be all right! Let this be the right thing to do!"

When they reached the hospital in Gallup, Leeka pulled the truck up to the emergency door. He spoke briefly to the white-clad attendants who sprang forward to meet them, and then nodded at Martha. "You go in with her while I park."

"All right." Martha opened the door on her side of the truck and scrambled out, turning back to reach up to help her mother slide across the seat. An instant later, one of the men in white had stepped in beside her and was leaning into the cab, easily and efficiently transferring the woman within to the wheel chair which had materialized suddenly beside them. Martha's last glimpse of her mother was of her face, wide-eyed and terrified, as she was wheeled away down the hospital corridor to the elevator.

"Don't worry." The nurse at the reception desk spoke soothingly. "We'll take good care of her. Has your mother ever been in this hospital before?"

"No," answered Martha. "She has never been in any hospital."

"We'll have to make out a card on her then. Would you give me her name and address? Are you her next of kin? Which doctor has she been seeing?"

Numbly, Martha gave the answers to the questions and signed the forms that were handed her. Then she followed



a second nurse down the hall to a small waiting room. After a few minutes, Leeka joined her there, and they sat together without talking, acutely aware of their own helplessness in the face of the efficient, white-clad figures who passed briskly back and forth in the corridor beyond the open door.

Please, let everything be all right, Martha prayed silently, and it was not to a multitude of spirits that she prayed.

"Please, God," she whispered—and in the stress of the moment, she knew finally, without a doubt, the One Power in whom she truly believed.

On the opposite wall of the waiting room there was a clock. Staring at the apparently motionless hands which still somehow managed in an hour's time to circle the face, Martha thought, This is Saturday, and the afternoon is almost over. Back in Albuquerque, the competition for the Nightingale Scholarship will be over also. By this time, they will have chosen a winner, and I was not even there.

A week ago, the realization would have been earth-shattering. Now, however, it was merely a fact, minor in comparison to the life-and-death situations which had filled the past twenty-four hours. Dispassionately, Martha thought of the scholarship—the chance to continue with her voice lessons—the distant dream of singing in opera before huge audiences. It was not meant to be, she thought. It was a lovely dream, but it was not the thing for which I was meant—in my case, it was simply not meant to be.

The acceptance of this was strangely easy, for there was acceptance of another kind as well. It had come slowly, throughout the long night and the day which had

followed. It had come, strongest of all, when she stood in the front room of her home, after the death of her grandmother, and looked about her at the children who were waiting for their breakfast. Benjamin and one of his cousins were bringing in firewood, and the little girls were wandering about, wide-eyed and bewildered, clutching at their corncob dolls and wondering at the strain and silence which filled the house. The baby tottered here and there, getting in the way of everyone, her matchstick legs bent outward beneath the infinitesimal weight of her tiny body.

Silently, Martha looked at her brother and sisters, as though she were seeing them for the first time. She noted the way their shoulder blades thrust out like little wings beneath the cheap material of their worn clothing. She thought of their growing up here at the pueblo, confined in a tiny world which had been suited to the needs of their ancestors. She thought of Benjamin with his bright mind and nimble fingers, following his father about the cornfields.

He could be a doctor, she thought, or an architect or a scientist—he could design bridges or fly jet planes! Yet, in the preordained cycle of things, twenty years from now, Benjamin would be one of the shabbily clothed scarecrows, struggling in the fields, hoping for a large enough harvest to feed his children through the winter. It was probable that he would not even remember how to write his name.

It cannot go on this way, determined Martha.

When she had been home at Christmas, she had seen these things and had turned her back upon them. She had



detached herself and averted her face. She had said, with scornful superiority, "My skin may be that of an Indian, but my mind and heart are those of a Bahana."

But she had had no *right* to do this. A wave of shame swept over her at the memory. She was *not* a Bahana, no matter how much she might wish that she were. The realization was quiet within her. It was as though, in some strange way, the death of her grandmother had broken a pattern of living. Something must come to take its place.

Gazing about her at the crowded room, at the faces of those who loved her, Martha felt the weight of responsibility settle upon her shoulders. I am theirs, she thought, and they are mine. My roots are here, and I cannot deny them. If I am to grow, they must grow with me.

Now, in the hospital waiting room, she thought of other words, the ones that Leeka had spoken to her that morning. She had ignored them at the time, because she had not wanted to hear them.

"Daughter-of-my-sister," he had said to her, "have you thought of the problems it would make for a doctor in this part of the country to have an Indian wife?"

Now, she faced the question and looked at it squarely. What would be the result of a marriage between herself and Alan? She saw them before her, the little doll-faced children, almond-eyed and freckled, neither white nor Indian. She saw them with their teddy bears and tricycles, playing on the sidewalk outside of their father's office. There were people, of course, who would not condemn them—or their children—for a marriage between two races. But there were others who would.

"Love is not a matter of blood," she had said to Leeka.

And he had answered, "There is more to marriage than love."

And there is more to love, Martha thought now, than marriage. I love Alan, and I believe that he loves me—but that does not necessarily mean that we can build a future together. Do we have the strength—Alan and I—to face the problems that would lie before us—for ourselves and our children? Could we combine our two worlds in such a way as to bring happiness, not only to ourselves, but to our peoples?

I don't know. Quietly, she accepted the realization. I am not old enough or experienced enough to know, and Alan is not either. We have much living still to do, before we can decide this. We cannot, ever, run away from one world by hiding in another.

The words "run away" made her think of Daniel. In the months that had passed since September, he had become as dear to her as her own little brother. She thought of him alone in the streets of the city, a small, desperate figure, glancing hopefully at the faces of passers-by for a glimpse of features that might resemble his own. What had he done when night came? What had he eaten? Where had he slept—Daniel, who woke screaming with nightmares even in the warmth and safety of his own bedroom? Now another night was coming. In only a matter of hours, the mountains would fade and disappear into the night sky and, somewhere, a wretched little boy would be huddled, crying, in the darkness.

Mrs. Boynton had sounded so upset on the telephone. All the cool, charming aloofness had disappeared in what had seemed to be a flood of real emotion.





She sounded, Martha thought, for the first time since I have met her, like a real mother.

Leeka shifted in his chair, drawing her from her reverie. They both lifted their eyes to the clock, and then turned to each other.

"It has been almost three hours now," said Leeka.

"Babies come in their own time," Martha told him.

"You would think, though, that they would come and tell us something." And then, as though his words had called forth a response, a doctor was standing in the doorway.

"Miss Weekoty?"

"Yes." Apprehension swept over her like an icy wave. Please, please, God, make it be all right—please make everything be all right!

"Your mother has just given birth to a baby boy." The doctor spoke the words matter-of-factly. "He weighs four pounds."

Martha's relief was so great that, for a moment, she could not speak. It was Leeka who asked the question.

"Is Mrs. Weekoty all right?"

"Fine, just fine." The doctor was a small, pink-cheeked man with glasses. "It is a good thing, though, that you brought her here. There were some minor complications. They were minor to us, but they would not have been to an uneducated midwife. We had to give oxygen to the baby. We have him in an incubator."

"The baby," Martha asked shakily, "is it—is *he*—all right too?"

"He is premature, of course," the doctor told her, "but

he seems to be sturdy. Unless something unforeseen develops, I think he is going to make it."

It was almost evening when Martha and her uncle returned to the pueblo. The sunlight was golden on the distant mountains. The children were playing in the yard, and, as the truck pulled through the gate, they went scrambling out of the way, laughing and tumbling over each other like a litter of puppies. Seeing them, Martha could not help being amazed at the resilience of childhood, which could throw off grief so quickly in the all-encompassing world of play.

A group of little boys were climbing on the depleted woodpile, intent on the launching of Benjamin's model airplane.

Leeka switched off the engine, and, all at once, the world was very quiet. Thin and far, over the rooftops, floated the voice of the village crier. The children paused in their game to listen, and one of them asked in a tone of interest, "What is he saying, Benjamin?"

At the sound of the voice, Martha felt her heart lurch within her. It can't be, she told herself. It simply can't be!

Opening the door of the pickup, she got out and walked over to the woodpile. Three of the little boys were wearing T-shirts and blue jeans. The fourth had on tan slacks and a green plaid sport shirt and was wearing a feathered headdress.

In the first instant of shock, Martha could only stand staring at him.

"Why, hello there, Marthal" said Daniel.





THE SENIORS had waited in line outside of the auditorium for over half an hour, stiff and self-conscious in their white gowns, fidgeting and talking and adjusting their caps and breathing in the hot, sweet air of the June night. Now, with the first strains of "Pomp and Circumstance," the waiting was over. The chatter of voices died away, and the long line straightened. Soberly and proudly, the girls and boys began to move forward, caught, as generations had been before them, by the beauty and solemnity of the march.

Stepping from the outer darkness into the brilliance of the brightly lighted auditorium, Martha was acutely conscious of Alan beside her and of Laurie's blonde curls bobbing ahead. The gown was scratchy and hung crookedly over her skirt, and her cap had slid forward so that the tassel kept swinging against her nose. Despite these annoyances, she moved with dignity, carried by the grandeur of the music, filled with a wonder that this moment, about which she had so often dreamed, had finally arrived.

At the steps to the stage, she and Alan parted company, she proceeding upward to the first row of chairs, while he, as Valedictorian, took his place in the row of speakers' seats near the microphone. For an instant, before turning, his fingers brushed against hers, and the contact filled her with a surge of nostalgia for the year behind them which had been and would never be again.

"Alan," she longed to cry out, "Alan—stay with me!" But, of course, she would not do so. He was already moving away from her, his shoulders set beneath the silly white gown, his face serious with concentration upon his speech, which was now only a matter of minutes away.

The long line of students, with Martha among them, moved up the stairs and crossed the stage in orderly file, to take their places in the rows of tiered seats looking out upon the audience. Once in her own place, Martha turned and stood quietly, gazing down at the faces spread before her. For a moment she was reminded of Daniel's nightmare of being lost in a world of strangers; then, suddenly, there they were, a little island of familiarity—Mr. and Mrs. Boynton and the boys.

They had come, she knew, to see Laurie, but their pride and affection would expand to include her as well. They were, in a way, her family, taking the place momentarily of the family back at the pueblo who had not been able to make the long trip into Albuquerque to witness her graduation.

"They wanted to come," Leeka had insisted, "but the baby is still so little. Your mother did not feel that she could leave him."

"Even with his aunt!" exclaimed Martha. But she had



understood. The baby was still a miracle too great to be left unguarded.

She let her mind return to the hospital and her new baby brother. How incredibly tiny he had looked, lying there in his incubator bed; how fragile and unready for the violence and confusion of the outside world. She smiled as she thought of the small, dusky face, already grown so beloved. How terrible it would have been if they had never had the chance to know him!

"He is beautiful," she had told her mother after she had seen him.

"Of course he is," her mother answered. Her terror gone, she looked drowsy and peaceful there in the hospital bed. "My children are always beautiful." She had paused then and added, "Your father—will you bring him here to see me? And will you tell him something?"

"Yes?" responded Martha.

"Tell him," her mother said, smiling, "that from now on, all our babies are going to be born right here in the hospital in Gallup."

The day her mother had carried her new son home, she had not laid him down for a moment, nor would she let anyone else in the family hold him. Martha could understand why she had not been able to convince herself to leave him today.

Leeka and Maria, however, had come over from Gallup. Martha let her eyes travel along the rows until, at last, she found them. They were seated near the back of the room, looking stiff and formal in their new clothes. Leeka was wearing his wedding suit, and Maria had a tiny white hat perched upon her head. Martha smiled at them, al-

though she doubted that they were close enough to be able to read her expression.

She turned her eyes again to the Boyntons, and Teddy bounced and grinned at her and wiggled his fingers. He was deliriously happy because it was past his bedtime. His mother shot him a warning look and bent over to speak to Daniel, who was seated beside her. When he answered, she put her arm around him and gave him a quick, impulsive hug.

To Martha, the change in Mrs. Boynton over the past weeks seemed unbelievable. She would never, as long as she lived, forget the shock of returning to Albuquerque with Daniel, to find his mother in bed and under a doctor's care.

"Dan Boynton," his father had roared as they entered the house, "I ought to turn you over my knee and wale the daylights out of you! Do you realize what you have put us through! Your mother and I have been frantic. We have had every policeman in the state of New Mexico out looking for you!"

His face was haggard from worry and lack of sleep, and to Martha, he appeared ten years older than he had the day she had left.

Daniel too seemed startled by the change. His eyes widened, and he took a step backward. "I'm sorry, Dad," he said weakly. "I—I didn't think you'd—miss me."

"Didn't think we'd miss you! You've had us crazy with worry! Your mother has cried herself sick. She is asleep now, under a sedative. Don't you know how much you mean to her? If anything had *happened* to you—" His voice had been rising, and he made a violent effort to get



it under control. "When Martha phoned us, we couldn't believe our ears. How on earth did you get to her pueblo?"

"I hitched a ride," Daniel answered in a small voice. "I hid in the back of a truck."

"All the way from Albuquerque to her village?"

"No, not that far. Just down Route 66 to the turnoff. The truck slowed down there and I jumped out. Martha had told me about the sign marking the way to her house." Daniel drew a long breath. "I walked the rest of the way."

"You walked it? Up that long road to the mesa?" Mr. Boynton was incredulous. "It must be at least fifteen miles. Where did you sleep?"

"Under some bushes," Daniel told him. "It wasn't too dark. There were a lot of stars."

"Weren't you afraid?" asked Martha. She knew, as no one else did, the violence of the midnight terrors.

"I was at first," Dan admitted, "but then I started thinking about what you told me, about the initiation and how the children couldn't be afraid or cry. I got to thinking how *this* could be my initiation. That way, when I got to the pueblo, I could start right in wearing my feathers."

"But why did you want to go to the pueblo in the first place?" his father asked him. "Why did you run away?"

Dan's face began to twitch. "That was the night of my program."

"Yes, I know it was. Didn't you want to be in it? Is that what it was?"

"No, not exactly. I mean, I wanted to be in it, but—well—with Martha gone, there wasn't anybody to come see it."

They were all silent a moment. Then his father asked

quietly, "Did you really think that Martha was the only one in this household interested in your pageant?"

"Mother had that dance at the Civic Club. I knew you would be going to that with her. And Laurie wouldn't go unless Martha made her. And there wouldn't be anybody left to *take* Teddy. So—so—"

"Yes?" prodded his father.

"So I thought I'd just go on up to the pueblo and be an Indian with Benjamin."

It was the simplicity of the explanation which finished the conversation. Suddenly, there was nothing left to say. Instead of speaking, Mr. Boynton had bent down and picked his son up in his arms and carried him up to his mother.

"Doris," he had said, "our son is home!"

Then he had closed the door behind them, but, from where she stood in the hallway, Martha could hear the murmur of voices and then the sound of Mrs. Boynton weeping.

Feeling like an intruder, she had gone outside to where Leeka, who had driven her back from the pueblo with Daniel, was waiting in the pickup.

"Is everything all right?" he had asked her.

"Yes," Martha had told him. "Yes, I think that from now on, everything is going to be just fine."

Now, from her place on the stage, she watched the Boyntons fondly, a group of people who had lived together for many years but were only now beginning to be a family.

The music was over now, and the principal was talking, addressing the class and the parents and commenting on





the year that was now behind them. Then he introduced Alan as Valedictorian. Martha watched with a thrill of pride as he crossed to the microphone, walking very straight, stretching his slender frame to its maximum number of inches.

She knew his speech already, for she had heard him rehearse it, but here in the mammoth auditorium, with hundreds of people listening, the words seemed new and exciting and terribly important.

"Parents and Friends, Fellow Classmates—" Alan began. "We are here tonight to celebrate the beginning of a journey. We have completed one phase of our lives and are preparing for another. We are standing on the edge of the world, looking ahead of us—at the rivers we shall cross and the mountains we shall climb! We are looking too at the ridges above us, at the cliffs and the mesas, at the high and wonderful places that we may never attain. Yet our lives lie before us, and if we use them wisely, we may build the roads and the bridges to lead toward these higher places, so that, when our children stand where we do now, they will be able to move smoothly forward, and from the highest ridges, they too will build bridges, that *their* children may move even farther."

Martha sat quietly, listening to the earnest young voice, and found even a deeper meaning behind his words.

When she came back from the pueblo, she had found that Barbara Baily had won the Nightingale Scholarship.

"You would have stood a good chance," Alan told her. "Especially if you had sung an Indian ballad the way I suggested. I took our notebook down with me when I went to listen to the competition. I showed the song trans-

lations to Mrs. Kirkland afterward, and she was so interested in them she borrowed the notebook to show her husband."

"If I couldn't win it," Martha said sincerely, "I'm glad it was Barbara. At least I've got the United Pueblo Agency scholarship. I will be attending the University."

"But I'll be out in California." Alan regarded her silently for a moment. Then he asked, "Would you marry me anyway, Martha? Even if it meant giving up college? You could get a job of some kind out on the coast. We could scramble it out some way."

"It wouldn't work," Martha told him. "What kind of job could I get? As a cleaning woman or a housekeeper? With you going on further, stretching and learning, becoming a professional man—a doctor?" She shook her head. "We would be too far apart, Alan. We would have nothing to talk about; you would pass so far beyond me. No, I must stay here. I have a chance at a college education, and I must take it."

"You've thought it all through," Alan said slowly.

"Yes, I have. Before I came back from the pueblo this last time. I looked at my people, and I knew what was needed. I am going to become a teacher."

"But your singing!" exclaimed Alan. "You're not going to give that up entirely? You can't!"

Martha smiled at him. "Wasn't it you who told me that, even if I could not go on to sing in opera, it did not matter? That I would still have my voice—that always I could sing to *somebody*?"

"And it was Rad," Alan said wryly, "who added that you could sing to *him*. I can't say that I like that idea at all."



He reached over and took her hand, and his voice was thick with feeling. "Martha—oh, Martha—this isn't over! Please, don't think it's over! You're my girl, and you always will be. I'll be home for vacations, and in the summers. It means waiting a while, but not forever. We still have a future!"

"Have we?" asked Martha gently.

"Sure we have. We'll both get our education. Then we'll get married and move out to your pueblo. You can teach, and I'll be their doctor. You told me how much they need a doctor. We'll lick any problems. Everything will be perfect!"

"Perhaps it will be," said Martha. All her love for him rose within her, until she could hardly bear it—until all she wanted was to put her arms around him and tell him. "Yes, yes—everything will be perfect."

The future will tell, she thought—and the future rose ahead, exciting and beckoning, a proving ground for both of them.

There will come a time, she looked ahead, when there will be someone for me, as there was for Leeka—someone like myself, who can stand with me on the ledge between our worlds. It may be Alan—I hope it is Alan—but if it is not, still there will be someone. One day, when the time is right, he will come—and there will be no more doubting. We will KNOW!

Alan's speech was over now—and the applause which had followed it. From her place on the stage, Martha could see a very small woman in the first row of the audience clapping long after the others had grown silent. That must be Mrs. Wallace, she thought, and she regarded the

woman with interest. She would be introduced to her after the graduation ceremony was over.

The chorus sang a song, and the scholarships were given. Alan, as everyone expected, won the science award. Barbara received her Nightingale Scholarship, and soon after, Martha heard her own name called. She rose and went forward to receive her fellowship from the United Pueblo Agency.

The principal presented it to her in the same manner with which he had awarded the others. Then, however, his expression seemed to change. He made a gesture to detain her and motioned toward the side of the stage.

"For our next announcement, I want to call on our musical director, Richard Shelby."

A hush fell over the room as Mr. Shelby came forward to stand behind the microphone.

"I would like the audience to know," he said slowly, "that Martha Weekoty is quite an unusual young lady. She came to us at the beginning of this year without the slightest musical training—in fact, she could not even read notes. She auditioned for the chorus and was accepted on the condition that she would remedy this lack of knowledge on her own. She accomplished this feat, and because of her outstanding voice and her intense love and interest in music, she is now one of our leading soloists. But that is not all."

He paused and withdrew a letter from his jacket pocket, which he unfolded. Holding it before him, he looked from it to the faces of the audience before he continued.

"I have here a letter from the University Press, saying that a book of Indian ballads, collected and translated by





Miss Weekoty, has been accepted for publication. The title of this book is *The Corn Maidens*. Martha, I want to be the first to congratulate you on this accomplishment."

There was a wave of clapping, and Martha accepted his handshake, too numb to take in the significance of his statement. It was only when he added, "I wonder if we could persuade Martha to sing one of her songs for us," that the full meaning struck her and, suddenly, she was weak with panic.

I cannot do it, she thought wildly. I simply cannot. As part of the chorus, even as a soloist, it was one thing. But I cannot stand here and sing for them—as an Indian!

Frantically, she turned to Alan, but he was already moving toward the piano. He sat down on the bench and smiled at her. This had been his surprise, his secret. Their eyes met, and it was like a touch of hands between them. No matter what happens, Martha thought—no matter what the future does or does not bring—we have had this.

The audience was waiting, and there was no turning backward.

"This," Martha said shakily, "is a song of my people." And she began to sing.

The faces swam before her, a sea of strangers, but after the first moment, she no longer saw them. The music took over, and it was just herself and Alan. Her voice rose effortlessly in the familiar story, as she had sung it to Benjamin, and to Daniel, and to Teddy. The auditorium was large and the lights were glaring, but as she sang, the walls shrank inward. The room grew small and filled with firelight, and fields spread green and soft with springtime,

and the Seven Maidens, white and beautiful, danced the corn from its winter sleeping.

When she was finished, the room was very quiet. She lowered her head and gazed down at the people before her, and they were no longer strangers. She looked into their faces, and her own face looked back at her, and there was no barrier.

I have done this, Martha thought in wonder. I have done this! *I* am the bridge between! And in that moment she knew with a quiet certainty the thing in the world she was meant to do.

When the applause finally came, it was tremendous and satisfying, and as inevitable as the two-heart season of September—or as the smoke from a hundred chimneys rising above a pueblo to join the jet stream in the sky.